150 *Years of Ceylon Tea & Community*

Selected Articles

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Prof. V. Suryanarayan
Founding Director and Senior Professor (Retd.)
Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies
University of Madras

Dr. A.S. Chandrabose
Department of Social Studies,
The Open University of Sri Lanka

P. Muthulingam
Executive Director
Institute of Social Development,
Kandy, Sri Lanka.

T. Kalaimagal
Development Specialist, Sri Lanka

Dr. R. Ramesh
Department of Political Science
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Preface

Tea plantation was introduced to Sri Lanka by the British planters 150 years ago, in 1867. The industry celebrates its 150th year in 2017. The first consignment of tea was exported 150 years ago bearing the name "Ceylon Tea". It is noteworthy, although the name of this country was Ceylon and it was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972 under the Republican Constitution, the government did not replace the name "Ceylon" with the name "Sri Lanka" in its tea trade. It is because the name "Ceylon" has been accepted as the symbol of quality by the global tea drinkers. Thus, the names "Ceylon" and "Tea" have become synonymous and both names are inseparable.

It was in this background that the tea producers, exporters, tea board and various other stakeholders in the tea supply chain commemorated the 150th anniversary of "Ceylon Tea" in 2017 with much pomp and fanfare. Several events were organized to commemorate the pioneers and performance of the tea sector as a foreign exchange earner but none of the events had even a word of praise mentioned for the dedication, hard work and sacrifices of the plantation workers, without whom the industry would not have been flourishing and successful.

Taking note of this, ISD planned an event dedicating it to the contributions made by the plantation workers to the industry for the past 150 years. To mark the event, a two-day programme was held on the 6th and 7th of October 2017 at the SIDA Hall, Hatton, supported by the Tea Plantation Worker Museum. On the first day, the organizers had invited workers (retired, seniors and currently working), to tell the audience about the past

and the present state of their working and living conditions. This was followed by a symposium on the second day for academics and activists to present papers on various thematic issues affecting the plantation workers. Prof. V. Suryanarayan, retired Founding Director and Senior Professor of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras who had published a number of research papers on the Sri Lankan Malayaha Tamil community, made the keynote address via Skype.

The papers were submitted in both Tamil and English languages. In this collection we have included five papers submitted in English Language. They include papers presented by Prof. V. Suryanarayan, Dr. S.Chandrabose, Dr. R. Ramesh, Ms. Kalaimahal and Mr. P.Muthulingam. Professor V.Suriyanarayanan writes about the identity and future challenges of the Malayaha Tamil Community. Dr. R. Ramesh in his paper *Emerging Political Patterns in the Plantation Sector of Sri Lanka: The Need of Democratic Politics* discusses about the changing political patterns in the plantation sector, factors that influence such changes, the status of traditional political leadership and the changing political aspirations of the plantation people. Ms. T. Kalaimahal in her paper on *The Hill Country Tamil Women in Trade Union and Politics and Emerging New Avenue* questions whether the Hill Country Tamil women need a trade union, The type of trade unions women workers need in the present environment and the emerging new avenues for gender equality. Mr. P. Muthulingam in his paper *The Hill Country Tamils in the North-East and their Political Aspirations* writes about the challenges faced by the Malayaha Tamils who

live in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces after having migrated from the plantations during the period from since 1958 to 1992. His paper also highlights the fact that one speaking the same language, practicing the same religion and culture is not recognize as qualification for one to integrate in to the community. Dr. Chandrabose discusses about the change that has taken place among the Indian Tamil plantation community in the country during the last thirty years particularly in the context of the income generating activities proposed by the estate management and the challenges of retaining their identity in the aftermath of repatriation in the country in his paper *Changing Scope of Plantation Industry & Emerging of the New Strata as Nation.* These articles will sensitize the readers on the current plight of the hill country Tamils of Sri Lanka.

P. Muthulingam
Executive Director
Institute of Social Development

Keynote Address

Malaiha (Hill Country) Tamils: Struggle for Identity, Dignity and Justice
by
Prof. V. Suryanarayan

Founding Director and Senior Professor (Retd.)
Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies
University of Madras

I cannot find adequate words to express my deep sense of appreciation and profound thanks to my friend Muthulingam and other office bearers of the Institute of Social Development for the honour they have conferred by requesting me to deliver the keynote address of this significant seminar. I am engaged in teaching and research on Sri Lanka for several decades and I consider this gesture as recognition of my academic contribution to the promotion of Sri Lankan studies in India.

The time chosen for holding this conference is propitious. Sri Lanka is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the tea industry. A number of seminars have been organized to highlight the contribution of tea to the Sri Lankan economy, the necessity to increase tea production and modernize tea industry. But this conference is unique because it highlights the contribution of the plantation workers of Indian Tamil origin, who are the backbone of the tea industry. They are, if I

may so, the Cinderella community in Sri Lanka. What is more interesting, I find some of the brilliant minds from among the *Malaiha* Tamils assembled here. I am sure the deliberations of this conference and subsequent publication as an edited volume will sensitise the Government and people of Sri Lanka to find quick solutions to the manifold problems facing the *Malaiha* Tamils.

During the first five decades after independence, the struggle of *Malaiha* Tamils had been mainly devoted to finding a just and amicable solution to the problem of statelessness which was hanging like a Damocles sword over their heads. With a judicious mix of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggles, the recalcitrant Sinhala leadership was compelled to grant citizenship to all those who were entitled to it. Citizenship was conferred even to the residue of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact who were to be repatriated to India. And what is more, their living conditions are slowly changing for the better. But much more remains to be done so that the people of *Malaiham* can lead a life of dignity and self-respect. I am reminded of what Prof. Derrick Bell, Professor for Law at Harvard Law School, wrote about the African Americans in the United States. In his book, *And We are not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice* (New York, 1987), Prof. Bell uses a fictional character, Geneva Grenshaw, to make the telling comment:

We have attained all the rights we sought in law and gained some of the resources we need in life. Like the crusaders of old we sought the holy grail of "equal opportunity" And, having gained it in court decisions and civil rights statutes, find it transformed from the long-sought guarantee of racial equality into one more device the society can use to perpetuate the racial status-quo. Our cause is righteous, but have we prevailed?

Relevance of Champaran

2017 is the centenary year of Champaran Satyagraha, the first civil disobedience movement which Gandhiji launched after his return to India from South Africa. Champaran is located in Bihar. The Satyagraha was organized to get justice to the indigo cultivators. Gandhiji, before he launched the Satyagraha, wished in make a thorough study of the ground realities. Therefore, he requested the local leaders to submit a detailed report on the situation in Champaran. After reading the report, Gandhiji asked the local leaders: "What is be the percentage of women in the Champaran?". The local leaders said, "about 50 percent". "But you have not made any mention about the conditions of women in the report". Gandhiji then deputed Kasturba Gandhi and another Satyagrahi Avantikabhai Gokkhale to go to the village, meet the women and submit a report by next evening. Kasturba and Avantikabhai went to the village the next day but could not meet the women. They were disappointed. As the sun was receding and shadows began to lengthen, an idea

struck Kasturba. They knocked at the door of the next house. Couple of minutes later, a feeble voice came from inside. "Who is knocking at the door". "I am Kasturba Gandhi, and I am being accompanied by my friend, Avantikabhai Gokhale. We are feeling thirsty. Can you give us a glass of water?" A few seconds later, the door was slightly opened, a hand came out with a glass of water. After quenching the thirst, Kasturba said, "We have seen the hand that gave us water. But we would like to meet you" She pushed the door open and went inside. Kasturba explained the purpose of their visit and their inability to meet any woman in Champaran. One woman said, "We are three women in this house. But we have only one good saree. One woman has gone out wearing that saree. That is why we did not open the door". Kasturba and Avantikabhai went back to Gandhiji and reported the matter. Hearing the tale of woe Gandhiji became determined to fight for justice to the people of Champaran. I am narrating this incident from Gandhiji's life to highlight the point that we must analyse all relevant aspects of *Malaiham* before suggesting solutions to the manifold problems affecting our community.

Contrasting narratives

The agony and suffering undergone by the Indian coolies under the British Raj and Planters Raj are innumerable. The verdant carpet of green in the central parts of Sri Lanka, which has made the island the veritable "island paradise" is due to the sweat and agony of the Indian Tamil workers. I am giving below four vignettes of the contrasting lives of the planters and the workers.

While teaching in Peradeniya University a few years ago, I came across the Memoirs of Philip Crowe, US Ambassador to Ceylon in the 1950's, entitled *Diversions of a Diplomat in Ceylon.* To quote Philip Crowe:

> The estate bungalows are roomy, surrounded by lovely gardens. Servants are plentiful and relatively cheap. Social life is mainly confined to the local club consisting of a tennis court and a bar. There at weekends the planters gather for bridge, gossip, drink, billiards and tennis. Somerset Maughm may not find the makings of a great novel immediately, but the pleasures of life in the small tea communities in Ceylon are apparent.

The British Broadcasting Corporation, a few months ago, telecast a documentary entitled *Coolies: How the British Re-invented Slavery.* The documentary portrays the lives of the planters in British colonies as follows:

> You can sit in your veranda and sip your lemonade and be fanned by a servant and have cut at your toenails the same time by some coolie and you can watch your labourers working, you could sleep with any woman you wanted, more or less everything was done for you from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed. People looked after you, people obeyed you,

people are afraid of you, your single word as a
plantation owner could deny life.

While the planters lived in the very "height of luxury, closest to
paradise", to quote BBC documentary, the workers led a life of
penury and hardship. CV Velu Pillai, the sensitive Indian Tamil
writer and political activist, has described the workers' lives as
follows

> Here is but a row of tin roofed lines
> the very warehouse where serfdom
> thrives with a scant space of ten by
> twelve there is the hearth,
> home drenched in soot
> and smoke, to eat and sleep,
> to incubate and breed,
> to meet the master's greed.

Vannachirahu, a young poet of *Malaiham,* gives expression
to the innermost feelings of his people during the times of
communal violence. In a poem entitled *Dawn,* he has written:

> Our nights are uncertain, dear,
> let us look at each other
> before we go to bed.
> This may be our last
> meaningful moment
> Firmly press your lips
> on the cheeks of our children
> Then let us think about
> our relatives for a moment
> Lastly let us
> wipe our own tears

Ceylon's own form of slavery

After years of protracted struggle in 1833 the institution of slavery was abolished in the British colonies. But the conditions of the workers did not improve in any way. Prof. Hugh Tinker has rightly characterized the new system which came in its place as *A New Form of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1820.* Kumari Jayawardena and Rachel Kurian, in their lucidly written book, *Class, Patriarchy and Ethnicity on Sri Lankan Plantations: Two centuries of Power and Protest,* have rightly termed the new system as Our Own Form of Slavery.

The plantation economy developed in Ceylon after the institution of slavery was abolished. When coffee and subsequently tea plantations were started the British planters knew about the availability of cheap labour in South India. The Sinhalese workers were reluctant to take up the hard work relating to clearing of the jungles and starting of plantations, the planters, therefore, turned to South India for cheap labour. Geographical proximity further encouraged the British. Kathleen Gouch, in her excellent study on *Rural Society in Southeast India,* has pointed out that the workers were in a state of "chronic indebtedness" to land owners and money lenders. They naturally became victims to the allurement of the Kanganies, who advanced them money to meet the expenses relating to travel and starting life anew. It could rightly be said that the Indian Tamil workers were born in debt, lived in debt and died in debt.

The workers faced innumerable problems on their long trek to the estates. They suffered from malaria and dysentery and when they fell seriously ill they were driven off or allowed to die

on the wayside. Their indebtedness to the Kanganies trapped them in a vicious system of slavery. The government, on the contrary, assisted the planters in several ways. They were given subsidies and incentives, including tax benefits; land was made available at cheap rates and, what is more, roads and railways, constructed by the Indian Tamil workers, linked the plantations to the Colombo port.

Something like a pyramid of power came into existence. At the top of the pyramid was the planter or superintendent, known in Tamil as *Periya Dorai* (big master), who wielded absolute power and could do anything that he wanted in the plantations. Under him was the *Sinna Dorai* (little master). Below them were the office staff, which included a Kanakkupillai (accountant), invariably an English educated Jaffna Tamil, who kept socially aloof from the plantation workers, but bossed over them. At the lowest rung were the workers, who occupied the overcrowded "lines". There was gender division, with women working from early morning till evening. With their nimble fingers they plucked the "two leaves and the bud" and carried the baskets to the factories. Men were given work relating to pruning of tea bushes. They worked for shorter hours, but they were paid higher wages till 1984. The planters did not allow the workers to interact with outsiders. This exploitative system continued for many years. As K Natesa Iyer, who was one of the pioneers in mobilizing the plantation workers, has pointed out:

The planting community is all powerful and highly organized and is able to have its own way in every matter… every inch of ground In the planting districts belongs to this community and every building is theirs.

Kumari Jayawardena and Rachel Kurien have summed up the situation aptly:

What evolved in the Sri Lankan plantations under colonialism was a combination of above and local forms of coercion to control the work force dividing it along caste hierarchies and giving rise to an extremely oppressive and powerful form of labour exploitation.

In the book, *Raj Agent in Ceylon, 1936-1940, TV Pai,* the distinguished civil servant, quotes an important leader PT Rajan about the conditions of the Indian Tamil Workers. To quote Rajan:

This was a period of darkness in the annals of the hill country. The Tamils then were mostly coolies in estates and the line rooms in which they lived were shackles of bondage. To spot one educated man among them was like finding a needle in a haystack. There

was none to guide and inspire them. To make matters worse the canker of caste and prejudice was eating into their vitals and the schools in the district were reluctant to admit their children.

Termination of recruitment in Madras Presidency

The Indian nationalist leaders, especially Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachari, were sensitive to the humiliation and indignities to which the Indian labourers were subjected in British colonies. In fact, Gandhiji had his political baptism in South Africa where he wielded the weapon of Satyagraha to fight for justice to the Indian population. During his visit to Ceylon in 1927 to popularize Khadi and prohibition Gandhiji had the opportunity to interact with the plantation workers. Gandhiji was accompanied by Rajagopalachari. In his book, *With Gandhi in Ceylon,* Mahadev Desai quotes Gandhiji telling the Indian Tamil workers "I want the labourers to understand that I am but one of you and have been casting my lot with you ever since my visit to South Africa 30 years ago". Nehru, who visited Ceylon in 1939, to study the problems of Indian workers who were retrenched by the Colombo Municipal Council not only appealed to the Indian community to unite under one banner, he also became conscious of the anti-India feelings and unsympathetic attitude of important Sinhalese leaders. TV Pai has quoted SWRD Bandaranaike, then President of the Sinhala Maha Sabha, saying: "Nothing will please me more than to see the last Indian leaving the shores of Ceylon… then I shall be a happy man".

Jawaharlal Nehru was the guest of TV Pai during his visit to Ceylon and Pai convinced Nehru that the best possible option for India was to terminate the recruitment of labour in Madras Presidency. On his return to India Jawaharlal Nehru persuaded Rajagopalachari, then Prime Minister of Madras Presidency, to put an end to the recruitment of labour in Madras Presidency. Voluntary movement of people between the two countries however continued.

Blinded by anti-India hysteria, the Sinhalese nationalists argued that the Indian Tamil workers were undercutting wages and depriving Sinhalese of work and repatriating large sums of money to India. C. Rajagopalachari, then Prime Minister of Madras Presidency, wanted to find out whether there was truth in these allegations; he wrote to the Government of India to ascertain the quantum of money sent home by Indians. The Government of India, in turn, asked the Indian Agent to furnish the details. Through the post offices the figure of remittances by Indians was found out. It was about Rs. 1,500,000/- per year which included the money sent by Kanganies as well as estate labour. TV Pai has written, "On an average it was not more than Rs 10/- per person for it was hardly likely that estate labour would have savings to send home, when he was in deep debt to the Kanganies and the shop keeper".

Indian Tamils rendered stateless

The British Government declared that wherever the Indian workers went they enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the indigenous population. Thus, in Ceylon the Indian Tamil

workers were given the right to vote like the indigenous Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamil speaking Muslims. In the 1947 parliamentary election the Indian Tamil electorate voted for the left parties which created a big chasm between them and the Sinhalese extremists. It led to the strident propaganda that the Indian workers would not only "swamp" electorates but also act as a "fifth column" in an Indian takeover over the country.

The first legislative enactment of the independent Government of Ceylon, with DS Senanayake as the Prime Minister, was to render the Indian Tamils stateless. The Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 and Indian and Pakistani Residents Act of 1949 not only disenfranchised the Indian Tamils, they also rendered them stateless. When applications were invited, nearly 825,000 applied for Ceylonese citizenship, which was clear illustration that the overwhelming majority wanted to permanently reside in Ceylon. But the Government granted citizenship to only 134,168 applicants. All others were characterized as "stateless". The provisions of the Citizenship Act were so cumbersome and complicated; naturally the plantation workers were not able to produce certificates to the satisfaction of Ceylonese bureaucrats.

The Citizenship Act was a gross violation of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states 1) Everyone has the right to a nationality and 2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality and denied the right to change his nationality. Pointing out the unjust features, Paul Sieghart, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the British Section of the International Commission of Jurists, has pointed out:

if one takes the view that all residents of Ceylon, who were British subjects immediately before independence became citizens of Ceylon on independence, then these people were deprived of that citizenship through the enactment of new law; if the status of citizen of Ceylon did not come into existence until the law was passed, then they were deliberately excluded from its automatic acquisition at that time. Whatever view one takes, the result today is a wholly arbitrary deprivation of the fundamental right to the citizenship of one's country to a group of people, almost all of whom were born there, who have lived there all their lives, who have never been anywhere else and have no other allegiance and who have made an immense contribution to that country's wealth while being themselves allotted only a derisory share of it.

Following the enactment of citizenship laws, the Government of Ceylon removed the names of Indian origin Tamils from the electoral rolls. This struck a death blow to electoral representation of Indian Tamils in Parliament. From 1952 to 1977, there was no elected representative of Indian origin Tamils in Parliament

No unity: Curse of the Tamils

It is the tragedy of Tamil politics in Sri Lanka that despite the unifying bonds of language and religion, the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Indian Tamils did not forge unity on crucial issues relating to nation building. The chief advisor to Prime Minister DS Senanayake on the citizenship issue was a Sri Lankan Tamil, Sir Kandiah Vaidyanathan. In his book, *Outside the Archives,* YD Gundevia, the Indian diplomat, who was negotiating on behalf of the Government of India on the future status of the stateless people of Indian origin, writes about Sir Kandiah Vaidynathan "arguing with us Ceylon's case against the Indian Tamil on the tea estates in his country". When voting took place in Parliament on the Citizenship bill, many Tamil members voted for the government. They included C. Sundaralingam and C Sittambalam (both members of the cabinet), independent members SU Ethirimanasingham, V Nalliah and AJ Thambiah and Tamil Congress members K Kanagaratnam and T Ramalingam. However, the Tamil Congress led by GG Ponnambalam and SJV Chelvanayagam voted against the Act. A few days later, the Tamil Congress decided to join the Government and its leader GG Ponnambalam was made a minister. This led to a split in the Tamil Congress; SJV Chelvanayagam and C Vanniahsingham resigned from the Tamil Congress and formed the Federal party.

While the Federal Party led by SJV Chelvanayagam played a commendable role on the issue of citizenship to the stateless people of Indian origin, on issues relating to the rights of plantation workers - equal pay for men and women, increase

in daily wages etc. - Chelvanayagam was ambivalent. For Chelvanayagam was a plantation owner; class loyalties naturally took precedence over workers' rights. It should also be pointed out that after the communal holocaust in July 1983, the TULF triumvirate - Sivasithambaram, Amirtalingam and Sampanthan - were carrying on effective propaganda in Tamil Nadu on behalf of the Sri Lankan Tamils. However, they never made any mention about the living conditions of the most marginalized and exploited section in Sri Lanka - the Indian Tamil population.

The caste affiliations further contributed to the widening of the chasm between Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils. The leadership of the Sri Lankan Tamils came from the upper caste Vellalas, whereas the plantation workers belonged to the scheduled castes and backward classes. The superiority complex of the Vellalas and utter contempt for those belonging to the lower castes is a notable feature of Sri Lankan Tamil politics.

Betrayal of Indian Tamils

In the protracted negotiations that took place after independence on the future status of the people of Indian origin, Jawaharlal Nehru emphatically maintained that they were the responsibility of Ceylon. Taking into consideration their long years of residence in the island and their contribution to the prosperity of the country, Nehru advised successive Prime Ministers to confer citizenship on them. Those who wanted to voluntarily come back to India, New Delhi will accept them as Indian citizens.

The principled stance of Jawaharlal Nehru was given up by Lal Bahadur Shastri. Advised by the Commonwealth Secretary CS Jha, New Delhi adopted a new policy on the issue. India wanted to come out of the diplomatic isolation in South Asia following the defeat in the Sino-Indian conflict 1962. The new policy was to solve the problem on the basis of "give and take". The astute politician that Sirimavo Bandaranaike was, she made the best out of the situation and clinched the issue in October 1964. By another agreement in 1974 the residue which was left out in the 1964 agreement was also sorted out. By these two Agreements New Delhi agreed to confer Indian citizenship on 600,000 plus their natural increase whereas Colombo agreed to confer Sri Lankan citizenship on 375,000 people plus their natural increase.

It is the tragedy of India-Sri Lanka relations that these two Agreements, which had a great bearing on the lives of thousands of people of Indian origin in Ceylon, were finalized by the two governments without taking into consideration the feelings and views of the plantation workers. Thondaman told me that he was not granted a visa by the Indian High Commission; he wanted to come to New Delhi and represent to the Government of India that the agreements were a betrayal of the Indians Overseas. It was the policy of the Government of India to discourage the Indians Overseas from taking Indian citizenship. In that context it was a bad precedent. Thondaman, the leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, described the situation as follows:

> We are a community of human beings, with soul, mind and body with personality and cannot be apportioned between countries like beasts of burden at others' whims and and fancies only to maintain good neighbourly relations. Humanity cannot be converted to merchandise in this modern age.

In his absorbing novel, *Refuge,* Gopal Krishna Gandhi movingly describes the inhuman conditions in which the plantation workers of Indian origin lived in Ceylon. When their applications for Sri Lankan citizenship were rejected, they did not know what to do. Avadai, a toothless old man, called by the fellow workers as the "wise one" echoed their feelings:

> We came to this land because our own land could not sustain us. I remember how parched the earth was, how hungry we were in our village of Avur in Pudukkottai. My father said, "let us go and register in the Ceylon office". And so, we registered and came here. We came in order to be able to work, to eat…and now, we have lost all links with our own native land, and we have sent our roots deep into this soil like the tea bushes planted by us, we are told… that we do not belong here, that we must go back to India, that if we

stay on here we will have no rights. Is
this fair? Is this just?

Gandhian form of struggle

It is a matter of great joy and pride that while we in India
frequently resort to violent struggles to achieve our objectives, the
Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka stuck to Gandhian forms to remove
the stigma of statelessness. The representative organization of
the Indian Tamils was the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC).
Started with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal
Nehru and in the august presence of S Satyamurthy, the Ceylon
Indian Congress (CIC) (name was changed to Ceylon Workers
Congress after independence) gradually emerged as the most
representative organization of the *Malaiha* Tamils. From its
inception, the leaders of the movement realized two basic
realities. Though they shared the common bonds of religion
and language, the hopes and aspirations of the two Tamil
communities were very different. First, located in Sinhalese
heartland and surrounded by Sinhalese villages the political
salvation of the Indian Tamils cannot be a separate state of
Tamil Eelam. It can only be a just solution to their problems
so that they can live in amity with the majority community.
Therefore, except for a brief period, when the Tamil groups
came together in the Tamil United Front, the political agenda
and programmes of the CWC were diametrically opposite to
that of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Equally relevant, they realized
to their dismay and disappointment the Government of India
was more interested in promoting bilateral relations than

in protecting the interests of the people of Indian origin. In a conversation with the author Thondaman pointed out to a provision in the India-Sri Lanka Accord, 1987 where the two governments agreed that the return of the Sri Lankan refugees from India will be accompanied by the repatriation of the Indian citizens to India. This provision was incorporated in the Accord without consulting Thondaman. It was a time when Thondaman was agitating for Sri Lankan citizenship even to the residue of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact. It must also be pointed out that the leadership of the CWC was committed to non-violent struggles. During the protracted ethnic conflict, the hill country remained relatively calm; it was an oasis of peaceful co-existence. Attempts made by the Tamil militant groups to incorporate the plantation youth in their violent struggle did not succeed.

The United National Party (UNP), which came to power in 1977, with the crucial support of the hill country Tamils gave the assurance that the Government would find a speedy solution to the problem of statelessness. On that assurance Thondaman joined the cabinet in 1978. But to his disappointment he found President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Premadasa were dragging their feet on the issue. Strikes were banned by the Government and that course of action was ruled out. Subsequently Thondaman came up with the idea of a prayer campaign, which was essentially based on Gandhian principles. The objective was to bring about a change of heart in the Sinhalese leadership.

On 29 May 1985, the CWC announced that a prayer campaign would be initiated from Thai Pongal (January 14) to Tamil

New Year Day (April 14) The workers would pray from 7 am to 12 noon and then resume work. Tea production would not be affected and, if necessary, the workers would work extra time. The workers would pray that God should give sufficient wisdom to Jayewardene and Premadasa so that they would take immediate steps to implement their solemn promise. Gamini Dissanayake, the Minister in-charge of plantation industry, declared that workers would not be given salary for five hours. Thondaman retaliated that the workers then would pray for the whole day.

The campaign had barely started; the Government realized the gravity of the situation and came out with the assurance that it would initiate immediate legal steps to solve the problem of statelessness. The result was the parliamentary Act which removed statelessness once and for all.

I had the opportunity of discussing the subject of prayer campaign with Thondaman during one of my visits to Colombo. Thondaman said that he did not know what to do. One night he was pacing up and down in his room. Early in the morning the idea of prayer campaign came to his mind. I told Thondaman that Gandhiji on several occasions used to refer to such incidents as the call of the "inner voice".

Through various stages the issue of statelessness has been resolved in Sri Lanka. Three legislative enactments have been passed: 1) The Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Persons No 05 of 1986; 2) The Grant of Citizenship to Stateless persons (special provision) Act number 39 of 1988 and 3) The Grant of Citizenship to persons of Indian origin Act number 35 of 2003. The third

enactment provides for citizenship to any person of Indian origin who is permanently resident in Sri Lanka since October 1964. It meant that not only stateless persons, but even those who opted for Indian citizenship but did not get repatriated to India were entitled to Sri Lankan citizenship. However, according to Foundation for Community Transformation, a leading think tank based in Colombo, there are still people who have yet to get their citizenship papers and national identity cards. I submit that this Conference should pass a resolution requesting the Government to look into the matter and find a quick solution to the problem.

Grant of Indian citizenship to refugees of Indian origin

On July 19, 2016 the Government of India introduced a bill in Parliament to amend certain provisions of the Indian Citizenship Act, 1955. The bill has been referred to the Joint Select Committee of parliament. The objective of the bill is to enable Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians who have fled to India from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh without valid travel documents or those whose valid documents have expired in recent years, to acquire Indian citizenship by the process of naturalization. Under this bill, such persons will not be treated as illegal immigrants for the purpose of Citizenship Act. In another amendment, the aggregate period of residential qualification for the purpose of citizenship by naturalization by such persons is proposed to be reduced from eleven to six years. A large number of people who would otherwise be illegal immigrants can now heave a sigh of relief if the bill goes through

as they would be eligible to become Indian citizens.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 owes its genesis to the assurance given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Hindus from those three countries, who have sought asylum in India, would be conferred Indian citizenship. But since singling out Hindus alone could be discriminatory; the bill has extended the right to acquire citizenship to other religious minorities living in those three countries.

The bill, when passed, would be of immense benefit to Chakmas and Hajongs of Bangladesh displaced because of the construction of the Kaptai dam and who are living in India as refugees for 65 years. The Supreme Court in *The Committee for C.R. of C.A.P. v Arunachal Pradesh* directed the Government of India and Arunachal Pradesh to grant citizenship to eligible persons from these communities and to protect their life and liberty and further prohibited discrimination against them.

Though India had not enacted a national refugee law, the three principles underlying India's refugee policy were slept out by Jawaharlal Nehru in parliament in 1959, with reference to Tibetan refugees. They include refugees who would be accorded a humane welcome and the refugee issue was a bilateral issue, the refugees should return to their homeland once normalcy returned there.

The proposed bill recognizes and protects the rights of the refugees and represents a welcome change in India's refugee policy. But it would have been appropriate if the bill used the term "persecuted minorities" instead of listing out the non-Muslim minorities in

the three countries. To give an example, the Ahmediyas are not recognized as Moslems in Pakistan and are subjected to various forms of discrimination. Other groups include Rohingyas, who being Muslims, are subjected to discrimination in Myanmar and have fled to several countries, including India. Such a gesture would also have been in conformity with the spirit of linguistic and religious rights of the minorities guaranteed under our constitution. Unfortunately, the bill does not take note of the refugees in India from among the Moslem community who have fled due to persecution and singles out communities on the basis of religion, thus being discriminatory.

Yet another disappointing feature of the bill is that it does not include the refugees of Indian origin who have come to India from Sri Lanka following the communal holocaust in July 1983. The ethnic fratricide which affected the plantation areas in 1977, 1981 and 1983 convinced many people of Indian origin that they could not live amicably with the Sinhalese. They sold all their belongings, came to Tamil Nadu as refugees, with the hope of acquiring Indian citizenship and permanently settling down in Tamil Nadu.

According to informed sources, there are nearly 29,500 *Malaiha* Tamils in refugee camps scattered over Tamil Nadu. They have absolutely no moorings in Sri Lanka. Their children have inter-married with local boys and girls and are well integrated into Tamil society. The young have availed of the educational facilities but are unable to get jobs commensurate to their qualifications because they are not Indian citizens. The refugees in Kottapattu camp, near Tiruchi, with whom I interacted told me "Come what may, we will not return to Sri Lanka".

All these refugees qualify for Indian citizenship under Article 5 of the Indian Citizenship Act, 1955. However, their plea for citizenship is negatived citing a central government circular that Sri Lankan refugees are not entitled to Indian citizenship. In a communication dated November 21, 2007 to the Special Commissioner for Rehabilitation, the Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu mentioned that there were strict instructions from the Government of India "not to entertain applications of Sri Lankan refugees for Indian citizenship". I submit that in the light of the recent initiatives of the Government of India the above-mentioned circular must be immediately withdrawn. Those *Malaiha* Tamils who want to return to Sri Lanka should be encouraged to do so; but those who want to settle permanently in India should be granted Indian citizenship.

I will be very happy if this conference makes an appeal to the Government of India through the Indian High Commission that those *Malaiha* Tamils who want to permanently settle down in India should be granted Indian citizenship without delay.

Sharp decline in population

A striking feature of the Indian Tamil community in the post-independence period is the sharp decline in population. The census authorities have listed the Indian Tamils as a separate category since 1911 census. In 1931, the Indian Tamils constituted 15.43 percent of the population, whereas the Sri Lankan Tamils numbered 11.29 percent. The Sirimavo- Shastri

Pact of 1964 and the subsequent Sirimavo-Indira Gandhi Agreement of 1974 led to the repatriation of the Indian citizens back to India and, therefore, contributed to the sharp decline in total numbers.

According to 2011 census the Indian Tamil population constitutes only 4.2 percent of the population. But according to informed sources it should be around 7.0 percent of the population. Some Indian Tamils who have left the plantations and moved over to urban areas have declared themselves as Sri Lankan Tamils. Many Tamils who migrated to the northern province following the 1977 communal riots also declared themselves as Sri Lankan Tamils. The census enumerators are Sinhalese; they do not make distinction between the two groups and club them together as Sri Lankan Tamils. According to the study made by the leading think tank, Foundation for Community Transformation, the Indian Tamils form "7.4 percent of the population of the country".

A matter of serious concern to the Indian Tamil community should be highlighted here. I recently happened to read a small book entitled *Upcountry Tamils of Sri Lanka: A Forgotten People or Endangered Community? written* by BA Kader (Kader Master), who is the main driving force behind Solidarity for Malayagam in London. Kader Master makes the point that in the districts of Nuwara Eliya and Badulla, where Indian Tamils dominate, the growth rate of the Indian Tamil population is showing a sharp decline. The author quotes Sasikumar Balasundaram, the Indian anthropologist, from his book, *Stealing Wombs: Sterilisation Abuses and Women's Reproductive Health in Sri*

Lanka's Tea Plantations: "The sterilisation in the estate sector is three times higher than the urban sector and almost three times that of rural sector". Kader Master poignantly asks, is it a case of "stealing wombs: Indirectly forced birth control?" I request the Foundation for Community Transformation to make a detailed study, on the basis of field work and interviews and come out with its own conclusions. After its publication, the matter should be taken up with the concerned government authorities.

In search of a new identity

The Indian Tamils, as Prof. Valentine Daniel points out, "are different from the Jaffna Tamils and the Sinhalese; they have also come to be different from the Tamils in the mainland" they left 100 to 150 years ago. A lively debate is taking place within the community regarding their identity and their future role in the island nation. In the years after independence they were reduced, in the eyes of the ruling elite in New Delhi and Colombo, to an embarrassing set of statistics; for the estate management they constituted cheap, docile labour to be exploited to the hilt; for the fanatics among the Sinhalese easy prey and defenceless victims in times of communal conflict and to the hide bound Jaffna Vellalas untouchables belonging to the lowest strata of Hindu society.

Ilanchezhian and RR Sivalingam were the first to use the term Children of *Malaiham*. The term is an expression of righteous indignation and also of self-assertion. It is a way of challenging and setting right the indignities to which the community has been subjected for several decades. They maintain that they are

the inheritors of a glorious past. To illustrate, CV Velu Pillai, in his conversation with Valentine Daniel, has given vignettes of the *Malaiha Makkalin Puranam* (The epic of the hill country Tamils).

The younger generation feels that the term Indian is used by the Sinhalese to argue that their loyalty is not to Sri Lanka, but to India. Since all of them have acquired Sri Lankan citizenship and have become a permanent feature of the demographic profile of the country they are keen to assert their Sri Lankan identity by discarding the term Indian. Their day-to-day life was, and is, molded by the hills, and, therefore, they want to call themselves the children of *Malaiham.* However, the Indian Tamils living in Colombo and other urban areas argue that they live outside the hill country. But what cannot be denied is the fact that for the overwhelming majority the roots are in the hill country. The lively debate within the community should be welcomed and once a consensus is reached the Government can be approached to adopt the new nomenclature for its records.

One aspect of the educational system in Sri Lanka has caused me considerable anguish. Religion is a compulsory subject in the school curriculum in Sri Lanka. The Hinduism that is taught in the Sri Lankan schools, as Prof. Valentine Daniel has pointed out, "is the Saiva Siddhantha which Jaffna Tamils claim that they have preserved and nurtured in pristine purity". Even the subject is called not Hinduism but *Saivaneri* (Saiva Marga). The colourful folk religion, which has added zest and variety to the Hindu religion and which is practiced in the hill country, does not get adequately reflected in the school curriculum.

Are the boys and girls of the hill country "children of a lesser God"? Will they not develop a feeling of inferiority complex and alienation if their religious practices do not find a mention in the text books?

I shall be very happy if this conference adopts a resolution requesting the Department of Education to look into the matter and revise the text books so as to include also the religious practices of the hill country Hindus. If Hinduism has withstood the test of time, it is because the Hindu religion as philosopher-statesman Dr. Radhakrishnan has pointed out is a "way of life" and encompasses various schools of philosophy.

Education and development

Since the advent of independence, third world countries are devoting considerable attention to problems of education and development. The ruling elite, social scientists and educational planners hold the view that education, through its input of trained manpower, is one of the most important instruments of social change. The Planning Commission in India considers education as the "most important single factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress and in creating a social order founded on the values of freedom, social justice and equal opportunity". The Education Commission appointed by the Government of India has highlighted:

> In a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity,

> welfare and security of the people. On the quality and number of people passing out of our schools and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction, the principal objective of which is to raise the standard of living of our people.

The main reason for the all-round backwardness of the people of *Malaiham* had been the neglect of education. Under the British Raj and the Planters Raj education was not at all a priority. When schools were started they performed the custodial function and not the instructional function. In 1920 there were only 275 schools with 11,000 pupils, whereas there were 68,000 children of school going age.

Sri Lanka has made commendable progress in human development. It is because, successive governments, belonging to the UNP or the SLFP, invested considerable financial resources in education and public health, but this progress did not percolate to the Indian Tamil community, whose main concern was the removal of the stigma of statelessness. I recall my visit to a primary school in Nuwara Eliya district in January 1983. It was around 10 am, children were happily shouting and playing in the class. The class teacher was missing. When I made enquiries, I was told he was still at home. I went to his house and I found the teacher, a Sri Lankan Tamil, was assisting his wife in household work and was cutting vegetables for lunch. He had absolutely no commitment to teach and considered his posting as a punishment.

I do not have the latest statistics, but the available statistics illustrate how vulnerable the Indian community is in the field of education. Let us compare the literacy rates. The national average is 91.8 percent, whereas in the hill country it is only 76.9 percent. Only 20.3 percent of the hill country population has secondary education and only 2.1 percent of them have post-secondary education. The drop-out rates are the curse of the community. I was teaching in Peradeniya University in 2006 and was taking classes to Tamil medium students in the final year BA class. There were 10 students, of whom 8 were Muslim girls, one boy from Batticaloa and only one girl from the plantation areas. In the same year, in Peradeniya University the number of teachers from the Indian Tamil community was less than 10.

Close examination of the educational scene clearly reveals that much more remains to be done to improve the quality of education, especially in Science, Mathematics and English. In this crucial sphere India, especially Tamil Nadu, can be of great assistance. Good teachers can be recruited from Tamil Nadu on a contract basis to teach these subjects. What is more, the Tamil Nadu Science Academy, which has evolved new methods like teaching Science and Mathematics through songs and stories, can introduce these methods in the hill country with necessary modifications.

The Government of India is playing a catalytic role in the field of education. Scholarships have been instituted for education in India at the high school and college levels. My interaction with those who have studied in India make me realize that

much more can be done by the Central Government and the Government of Tamil Nadu in the crucial area of education. Among the delegates present in this conference are two of my good friends, Thiru Vamadevan and Dr. Chandra Bose, whose lives were transformed by interacting with faculty and students in India's leading universities. They can tell you that how much can be done by the Central Government and the State Governments in India in this sphere.

Tamil Nadu in many ways can be a role model for the hill country in the field of education. The nutritious mid-day meal scheme has not only increased enrolment in the schools, it is now accepted as a model to be emulated by several Indian states. Free bus passes should be made available to all students in the hill country. Mid-day meals could be supplemented by a glass of milk and evening tea. Hostels for boys and girls with good facilities should be started in Kandy, Hatton and Colombo. The affluent among the Indian Tamils can financially contribute towards this noble endeavour.

I would like to conclude this section with a quotation from two eminent Indian educationists VN Kothari and PR Panchamukhi. To quote them:

> Education alters the attitude to work, consumption preferences, saving propensities, economic rationality, adaptability, innovativeness, flexibility, attitude towards family size and various social attitudes relevant from the economic point of view.

Indian diplomacy at its best

Mention has already been made of the unhelpful attitude of Indian Government on the question of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact and India-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. However, I would like to highlight one incident when the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka adopted a bold and positive stance towards the hill country Tamils.

In mid-1981, organized riots took place in the hill country, accompanied by loot and arson. The objective of the lumpen sections of Sinhalese population, encouraged by prominent Sinhalese leaders, was to drive out as many Indian Tamils as possible to India before the India-Sri Lanka Agreements ended on October 31, 1981. Thomas Abraham was the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka (1978-1982). He identified himself with the hopes and aspirations of the plantation workers. His dispatches made New Delhi sensitive to the inhuman aspects of the India-Sri Lanka Agreements in general and repatriation in particular. Brought up in Nehruvian traditions Thomas Abraham had served in Burma, and Singapore, which had Indian minority population. He visited almost all the plantations in Sri Lanka and had detailed discussions with trade union leaders, NGOs and elected representatives.

When the riots took place, Thomas Abraham deputed Gopal Krishna Gandhi and Ranjan Mathai, who were First Secretaries in the Indian High Commission to the affected areas for an on-the-spot study of the problem. They reported that the violence was organized. Immediately afterwards Thomas Abraham proceeded to the plantation areas to see for himself

the mounting tragedy. WT Jayasinghe tried to dissuade him stating that Colombo would not be able to provide him security. Thomas Abraham responded: "I did not ask for security. It is customary for the High Commissioner to inform the Foreign Office whenever he leaves the office".

Thomas Abraham was shocked by the senseless violence. On his return to the capital, Thomas Abraham made one of the most memorable statements, ever made by an Indian diplomat. He declared that if the Sri Lankan Government would not restore law and order in the plantation areas, India would have to think of taking its own steps. The chauvinist elements in Sri Lanka accused Thomas Abraham of interfering in the internal affairs of the country, but the High Commissioner stuck to this principled stance. The warning had the desired effect and sent shock waves throughout Colombo. President Jayewardene acted swiftly and steps were taken to restore law and order in the plantation areas.

During his next visit to India Thomas Abraham met Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MG Ramachandran and apprised him of the Sri Lankan situation. It may be mentioned that MG Ramachandran had lived in the hill country during his childhood days and was sensitive to the vulnerable status of the Indian origin Tamils. MG Ramachandan led an all-party delegation to New Delhi and submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister requesting the Government of India to terminate the India-Sri Lanka Agreements.

It may also be pointed out that the personal equation between Smt Indira Gandhi and President Jayewardene had drifted from bad to worse. Colombo's tilt towards the West on major

foreign policy issues was not to the liking of Indira Gandhi. The end result was New Delhi's decision that the two pacts would terminate on October 31, 1981. No more applications for Indian citizenship would be received by the Indian High Commission after that date.

How did Colombo respond to Indian initiative? In his book, *The Indo-Ceylon Problem: The Politics of Immigrant Labour,* WT Jayasinghe has completely ignored the facts mentioned above. In fact, only one paragraph is devoted to the shocking incidents that took place in mid-1981. There is no mention about the organized violence, no mention about the Indian High Commissioner's visit to the hill country and no analysis of New Delhi's changed stance. Jayasinghe mentioned that it was a bolt from the blue when in March 1982, the Indian High Commission transmitted a third person note from the Indian Government to the Ministry of Defence that two Agreements of 1964 and 1974 were no longer binding. Jayasinghe adds that India thus delivered a *coup de grace* to the two agreements.

Reservation - need of the hour

The manifold problems facing the people of *Malaiham* can be solved only if the Government of Sri Lanka recognizes them as a disadvantaged community and introduces reservation in admission to schools and colleges, award of scholarships and recruitment to jobs. Reservation or affirmative action as it is called in the United States is one means through which age-old inequalities can be redressed. The underlying principle can be

summed up as follows: A mother has four children. One child is handicapped and therefore, the mother has to take special care of the handicapped child. The hill country Tamils, for historical reasons, are a handicapped group socially, economically, educationally and in terms of political participation and, therefore require reservation so that equality of opportunity is guaranteed to them.

The transformation that has taken place in Tamil Nadu in the post-independence era is mainly because the Government has introduced reservation for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes. The delegates in this conference, representing the hill country Tamils, will be happy to know that two years ago the grandson of a Sri Lankan repatriate got recruited in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and is currently working in Kozhikode collectorate. There are also success stories of children and grandchildren of repatriates who have qualified in information technology and are occupying managerial positions in IT companies.

Justifying the reservation policy, Justice Chinnappa Reddy stated few years ago, "When reservation is extended to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, it is not a concession or a privilege extended to them, it is in recognition of their fundamental right to equality of opportunity and… to secure to all its citizens justice - social, economic and political - and equality of status and opportunity". I cannot resist the temptation and want to quote Justice VR Krishna Iyer who was considered to be the "conscience of Indian judiciary". Delivering Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture in Madras University few years

ago, Krishna Iyer declared that "man is not born equal and, therefore, he is in chains". He added that Justice should not be blind, it must be weighted in favour of the poor, exploited and marginalized.

I will be happy if this Conference triggers a healthy debate within Sri Lanka about the necessity to introduce reservation to the hill country Tamils. A national consensus should be built on this issue so that the Government takes note of the justness of the demand and reserves 7 percent of seats in institutions of higher learning, in recruitment to government jobs and award of scholarships to hill country Tamils.

How to introduce participatory democracy

It is extremely difficult to hazard a guess as to what type of political system will emerge in Sri Lanka under the present political dispensation. However, it must be pointed out that the introduction of proportional system of representation under the 1978 Constitution enabled the hill country Tamils to have greater representation in legislative bodies and increased their clout with the government. According to media reports the new system will be a combination of proportional system of representation and the first past the post system. How it will work out is to be seen.

The main focus of the debate within Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka watchers abroad is devolution of power to the provincial councils. The present government returned to power with overwhelming support from the minority communities and minority support

from the majority community. The Government is naturally keen to widen its electoral base among the Sinhalese; to what extent it will affect the extent of devolution to the provinces will be closely watched. But as far as the hill country Tamils are concerned what is required is not merely devolution of powers from the centre to the provinces, but from the provinces to the Pradeshiya Sabhas. If Pradeshiya Sabhas are granted more powers, the hill country Tamils living in Nuwara Eliya, Kandy and Matale districts will have a greater say in shaping their destinies.

The objectives of nation building in a multi-ethnic state like Sri Lanka were ably summed up by Tissa Vitharana few years ago:

> The right of every constituent people to develop its own language, to develop and promote its culture and to preserve its history and the right to its due share of state power including the right to due representation in each division in government shall be recognised without in any way weakening the common Sri Lankan identity

In other words, how to be a proud *Malaiha* Tamil while being a loyal Sri Lankan citizen is the dilemma facing our community today. The intelligentsia within the community should ponder over these issues and make valuable inputs to the government for implementation.

In his analytical study on *Constitutional, Electoral Reform*

Proposals and Indian Origin Tamils PP Devaraj has given the names and photographs of Indian Origin representatives in the State Council and Parliament from 1931 to date. Perusing through the list I was struck by the fact that there is not even one woman representative. The Institute of Social Development and other NGOs should take the initiative and encourage more and more women to participate in the political process of the country. As Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Head of the Women's Wing in the United Nations put it, "For me a better democracy is a democracy where women not only have the right to vote and to elect but get elected".

Tamil Nadu and Hill Country Tamils in Sri Lanka

In my keynote address I have tried to give a bird's eye view of the problems and prospects of the Hill country Tamils from an Indian perspective. There are important issues which I have not covered - improvement of working conditions, necessity to have a living wage, ineffectiveness of political leadership, improvement of transport and communications, gender issues and sanitation. I am sure this conference will discuss these topics in detail. Before I conclude I want to touch upon one important dimension dear to my heart namely Tamil Nadu and hill country Tamils in Sri Lanka.

How do governments and people in Tamil Nadu respond to the hopes and aspirations of our Tamil brethren living across the Palk Strait? And, what is more, how do the developments in Tamil Nadu affect the Tamil community in Sri Lanka? In

politics and in culture the major events in Tamil Nadu were watched with great interest by the Tamils living abroad. The movements which crystallized into various Dravidian parties, the demand for linguistic state, and the working of centre-state relations in India were reported extensively in the Sri Lankan Tamil media.

While interpreting the under-currents of Tamil Nadu politics, a discerning student has to distinguish between rhetoric and reality. The Dravidian parties used to highlight the sacred duty of Thai Nadu to protect the interests of overseas Tamils. In the popular Tamil film, *Parasakti,* the script of which was written by Karunanidhi, hero Gunasekharan, role played by Sivaji Ganesan, poses the question: "Why is the waters of Bay of Bengal saltish?" And replies "It is because of the tears of Overseas Tamils"

The absence of commitment and genuine feelings of solidarity among the Tamil Nadu politicians becomes evident if one keeps in mind the plight of the Sri Lankan repatriates. To the vast majority of plantation Tamils, who opted for Indian citizenship, it was not homecoming, but it was expatriation. Most of the grandiose schemes for the rehabilitation of the repatriates failed due to unimaginative planning, bureaucratic bungling and red tapism. For the repatriates it was bitten homecoming. Unwanted in Sri Lanka and unwelcome in Tamil Nadu, these unfortunate people were referred to as Sri Lankan Tamils, a status which they never got in Sri Lanka even after many years of residence.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not mention the fact that over the years the conditions of the repatriates have improved. The children and grandchildren of the repatriates are well integrated

into Tamil Nadu society; they have joined various political parties and what is more, as a result of reservation, there is upward mobility among them.

Permit me to make one important point. The International Tamil Conferences held in Chennai, Madurai and Thanjavur were intended to boost the image of political leadership and not to discuss the living conditions of Overseas Tamils. In Thanjavur, there was absolutely no representation of Sri Lankan Tamil community. Prof. Sivathamby, who reached Thanjavur one day ahead of the Conference, was taken away and put in an aircraft proceeding to Colombo. According to informed sources Savumyamurthy Thondaman was extended an invitation only after Prime Minister Narasimha Rao spoke to Chief Minister Jayalalitha. True to AIADMK style, huge cut outs of Jayalalitha "adorned" different parts of the city.

During the protracted ethnic conflict, the peculiar problems facing the hill country Tamils were never mentioned by the political leaders of Tamil Nadu. Nedumaran, Vaiko and Veeramani, the drummer boys of the LTTE, used to shout from house tops that the establishment of Tamil Eelam is the only viable solution in Sri Lanka. I have mentioned earlier the necessity to confer Indian citizenship to the hill country refugees who are living in Tamil Nadu. But no political leader in Tamil Nadu has ever spoken on the issue. After the end of the ethnic conflict Tamil Nadu should have attracted large number of students from Sri Lanka; but the fact remains that even those who are awarded the Government of India scholarships for higher studies in India prefer to enroll themselves in educational

institutions in Karnataka, Punjab and New Delhi. Dr. Chandra Bose and Vamadevan can vouch safe for what I say.

Conclusion

The transformation from *Thottakattan,* barbarian from the plantations, a contemptuous term used by the Jaffna Vellalas to denote the hill country Tamils, to the noble appellation, *Malaiha Makkal (*Children of the Hill country) is an illustration of the qualitative change that has taken place in the hill country. However, equality and justice still elude the people of *Malaiham.* A long struggle is ahead of the community and I express my solidarity and support; I wish them all success.

Let me conclude my presentation with a poem written by MA Nuhman, whom I had the privilege to know while I was associated with Peradeniya University.

> Where there is no equality
> there is no peace
> where there is no peace
> there is no freedom.
> These are my last words
> equality, peace and freedom

I am grateful to Selvi Saranya and Selvi Lavanya for assisting me in the computerization of the essay.

"Changing Scope of the Plantation Industry & the Emergence of New Strata as Nation"

Dr. A.S. Chandrabose
Department of Social Studies,
The Open University of Sri Lanka

Introduction

The saga of 150 years of tea cultivation in Sri Lanka has tremendously influenced not only the economy of Sri Lanka, but the culture of the society as well. Undoubtedly, the CEYLON TEA has placed the country on a prominent place in the world map. The prominent place for Ceylon tea is not merely because of the conducive geographical condition of tea production in the country and the valuable administrative system of British rulers in the country, but also the uninterrupted contribution and commitment of the migrant workers of the Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka. The commitment of the migrant tea workers which started in 1867 has lasted for 150 years. This period could be divided into two phases. The first phase is from the inception of the tea cultivation up to the 1970s, this period of 120 years was static and most of the tea workers were confined to tea estate work. Subsequently, the implementation of nationalisation and the programme of repatriation which were implemented by the successive governments of Sri Lanka in the 1970s broke the status of immovable tea workers of Indian Tamils into movable social group in the country.

This study is about the change that has taken place among the Indian Tamil plantation community in the country during the last thirty years particularly in the context of the income generating activities proposed by the estate management and the challenges of retaining their identity in the aftermath of repatriation in the country. The chapter is divided into two parts. Part I illustrates the impact of nationalisation and Part II is mainly dealing with the impact of their social life after privatization of the industry.

Part I

Nationalization and its impact

The British owned plantations were nationalized during 1972-75. A total extent of 253,029 hectares (Tea:166,405, Rubber:74,494 and Coconut:48,130) of plantation areas were nationalized and the management of the nationalized plantations were distributed to the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) of the State Plantation Corporation (SPC) and two other institutions namely Upcountry Estate Development Board (USAWASAMA) and *Janatha* Estate Development Board (JEDB) and these three institutions were controlling about 35 percent of the total area under plantation agriculture in the country. The administrative set up, however, did not remain static. For instance, USAWASAMA which controlled 107 estates with the aggregate extent of 29,500 was disbanded at the end of 1977 on grounds of inefficiency and the properties under its controlled were re-allocated among the SPC and JEDB. It

should be noted that the two corporations were considered as gigantic organizations controlling the plantation in Sri Lanka (Peiris, G.H., 1984).

The low productivity was manifested as the cumulative effects of several factors such as poor rates of replanting and infilling, inadequate fertilizer applications and neglect of soil and water conservation. Apart from this, the additional burden of increase of the export duties imposed by the government and recruitment of additional labour through the influence of political parties and mismanagement led to the collapse of the nationalized plantations.

The government finally decided to privatize the plantations and created 23 state-owned Regional Plantation Companies (RPC) out of SLSPC and JEDB and 449 estates with the extent of 190,802 hectares (this including the extent of rubber estates as well) were relocated to these 23 RPCs. The RPCs were granted land on a 99-year lease at a nominal annual rent of Rs. 500 per estate. The RPC entered into an agreement with a private company to manage the estates in 1992.

The tea estates which were privatized through RPCs have now reached 25 years (1992-2017) experience in managing the estates. But the performance of the privatized tea estates is far from satisfactory. The Statistical Information on Plantation Crops (SIPC) published by the Ministry of Plantation Industries, illustrates the performance of tea plantation in the country. The RPC shows the downward trend when comparing in the context of land extension, production and replanting activities.

**Table1: Extent of Tea Estates in Sri Lanka
1995 - 2012**

Year	Extent of tea in hectares			
	RPC	Other State Agencies*	Smallholdings	Total
1995	89,244 (48.97)	9,964 (5.44)	83,369 (45.59)	182,914 (100.00)
2000	89,843 (48.75)	9,721 (5.27)	84,703 (45.98)	184,267 (100.00)
2005	86,336 (40.76)	8,952 (4.22)	116,492 (55.0)	211,780 (100.00)
2010	76,534 (37.40)	7,580 (3.70)	120,500 (58.90)	204,619 (100.00)
2012	72,684 (35.80)	7,391 (4.63)	120,955 (59.57)	203,020 (100.00)

Source : Compiled from the various issues of Statistical Information on Plantation Crops published by the Ministry of Plantation Industries, Colombo 2

Table 1 Illustrates the extent of tea in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the total tea land had increased from 182,914 hectares in 1995 to around 203,020 hectares in 2012. The expansion of total tea lands does not reflect the tea lands under the RPC and the state agencies. Accordingly, the extent of tea lands under the RPC was 89,244 hectares (which was 48.97 percent) and it was distinctly higher than the extent of tea lands under the smallholdings, which had the extent of 83,369 hectares (or 45.59%) in the same year. However, the situation has changed during the last

decades. The tea land handed over to the RPC has steadily declined to 72,684 hectares (which is only 35.80 percent of the total tea land in the country) whereas, the tea smallholdings has surpassed the RPC and state agencies and has the extent of 120,955 hectares of tea (which is almost closer to 60 percent of the total tea land in the country.) It should be noted from Table 1, the extension of tea land of the state agencies also had the same experiences of downward trend as the RPC. The declines attribute largely to the progressive abandonment of uneconomic tea land in the physically marginalised RPC estates, particularly in the mid country.

The total production of tea in 1995 was 234.20 Million Kgs with the contribution of almost 60 percent (56.83 percent + 3.00 percent) from RPC and the state agencies in the country. Total production of tea steadily increased and produced record level of production 328.4 Million Kgs in 2012. However, the share of the total production by the RPC and the state agencies were substantially declined to around 28 percent (27.43 percent + 1.23 percent) in 2012. Effective financial incentives and subsidized inputs for cultivation and fertilizer provided by the government was the main attributing factor for increased share of production in smallholdings in the past few years. In contrast, low labour productivity, low rate of replanting / new planting and low level of fertilizer application was some causes for reduction of the total share of the RPC estates, especially the state-owned tea estates in the country.

As far as the replanting activities are concerned the tea smallholding sector has significantly increased, and around 90

percent of its tea bushes are of high yielding varieties giving around 1800 kilograms per annum from a hectare as against around 1200 kilograms in the RPC and the state institutions of the country. Amongst the tea estates the lowest yield was found in the mid grown tea region and it is 750 kilograms per hectare per annum which is managed by the RPC. Apart from above the lowest yield of roughly 550 kilograms per hectares per annum was recorded in the tea estates managed by the state agencies. Ironically, it is the major contributory factor for overall record of low level of yield by the RPC estates. Indeed, nearly 47 percent of the total tea land which comes under the purview of RPC are high yielding varieties and mainly intensified in the high grown tea regions of the country. However, the large extent of tea bushes i.e. 53 percent, managed by the RPC, and the state agencies are very old seedling tea bushes planted during the British period in the country.

The above information explains the retardation of cropping pattern of tea plantations which is particularly managed by the RPC and state agencies. It also shows the deviations of RPC and the state agencies in the context of extent of land and production which have significantly made impact on the social life of the tea plantation workers during the post-privatization.

RPC tea workers

The tea plantation is a highly labour-intensive sector with the worker hectare ratio of the sector being 2.5:1 and the production requires both male and female to work in the estates. Therefore, the labour population had been numerically strengthened from the inception of tea plantation sector in Sri Lanka. However,

the strength of the registered labour reduced during the post-privatisation. The total registered labour in the tea estates prior to the privatisation in 1990 was 384,168 and it dropped to 280,788 in 1995. Subsequently, the numerical strength of registered workers in the tea estate was 180,168 in 2015 and it dropped by 35.71 percent from 1995.

The drop in the registered labour in the tea estate was one of the strategies of retrenchment of the privatized tea plantations. Through the retrenchment, the estate managements attempted to reduce the burden of high cost of production and leave behind the provision of guaranteed 300 days of work for the registered workers.

The recent studies carried out about the plantation community show the discontinuity of immovable labour situation in the tea estates. Accordingly, the deployment of workers is divided into three categories based on their occupation. These are: **i)** the workers fully involved in estate jobs (52 percent) **ii)** the workers partly involved in estate jobs (35 percent) and, **iii)** the workers fully engaged in non-estate jobs (13 percent). It is also revealed that the male workers heavily dominate non-estate jobs. Large segment of the workers who have partly involved in the estate jobs are retired under the pre-retirement scheme which was encouraged by the estate management under retrenchment. It should also be noted that the temporary and casual workers do not receive any entitlement other than occupying the estate house provided by the estate management to the registered workers. Many of the retired persons who are living in the estates are either engaged as temporary or casual workers in

the estate job. The estate provides only the minimum wage for such workers. Through which the estate management also tries to mitigate the issue of cost of labour in the tea production.

The steps taken through retrenchment have not only led to a drop in the numerical strength of registered labour but also deprived the enhancement of daily wages by the estate workers. The estate workers are still considered as the low-income group in the country, and poverty and indebtedness are the dominant features amongst the estate workers.

A consultant study indicates that even though the tea estates managed by the RPC and the state agencies suffered severely from inadequacy of investment, they show marked improvement in agricultural standards on the estates and made profits in 1995 due to favourable export prices for rubber which they produced in addition to tea (Shanmugaratnam, 1997). A senior government technocrat also stated about the crisis of managing the large-scale tea estate in the country. According to the technocrat, even though the biggest Sri Lankan firms that succeeded in managing the tea estate have never managed an enterprise such as RPC. Their own experiences in plantation management is limited but they have been able to hire former estate managers and staff.

The veteran trade union leader late Mr S. Thondaman in 1997 charged the companies to pay an extra cost of living allowances of Rs.8.00 per day to the workers; deliberately cutback employment by abandoning replanting, weeding and land development. He also went on to state that the performance and management style of these companies led to a pervasive

sense of frustration, insecurity, disillusionment and lead to new modes of labour grievance. Thus, it is clear from the fact that the task of the RPC to transform the large-scale tea estates into a profitable venture in this country, is not feasible. Consequently, the Planters' Association of Ceylon (PAC) came out with extending the outgrowing model to sustain the large-scale tea sector.

The proposed outgrowing model

The outgrowing system proposed by the PAC is also known as Revenue Sharing Wage Model. According to the proposal of the PAC, the system is not a complete break away from management-based wage model. This model suggests a self-management wage system based on productivity of the workers'.

The following guidelines will be adopted in the proposed model

1. The proposed productivity-based wage model will guarantee 10 days' work at the current wage rule.

2. The rest of the days the workers will be paid on productivity-based payment scheme where for each kilo they pluck they will be paid a specific rate as it is done in the Tea Smallholding Sector. This allows people to make their own choice with free movement mechanism.

3. All agricultural work, agronomic practice and the harvesting will be done by the grower himself.

4. The harvested green leaf will be compulsorily supplied to the designated estate factories.

5. Predetermined percentage of 35 percent of the Net Sale Average (NSA) is to be paid as green leaf cost as done in Tea Smallholding sector.

6. The estate management will ensure the supervision and the execution of all the standard harvesting and field maintenance practice related to the plantation agriculture, while maintaining records of input supplies, purchase of green leaf and adherence of the 'Terms and Conditions' of the agreement.

Conditions of the proposed model

1. The assigned block cannot be transferred to another party.

2. The plucking of tea leaves to be carried out on days and in the areas of the estate specified by the estate management.

3. All field practices and agricultural work carried out will be subject to estate management approval and no constructions of any sort will be permitted.

4. No other activities or agricultural crops other than the plantation crop/ activities can be done in the assigned block.

5. The assigned grower has no claim of outright ownership for the land as the land is anyway owned by the government and the estate will retain the right to take back the block with seven days' notice for contravening conditions in the agreement or for neglecting the agricultural or the agronomic condition of the crop or field.

The report also demonstrates the potential earnings of the workers per month in the proposed model.

The potential harvest of green leaf from the VP and old tea bushes in the field give the prospects of earning. Accordingly, a total of Rs 19,040 could be earned by producing 400 Kgs of green leaf and it will increase to Rs. 23,800 by producing 500 Kgs of green leaf.

Advantages of the outgrowing model

The outgrowing model has increased the estate workers' income. Indeed, the system has reduced the poverty among the targeted families in the estates.

1. The outgrowing system is a successful strategy implemented by the estate management to renew the benefits from the low yielding old type of seedling bushes on the respective estates.

2. The estate workers involved in the outgrowing system have received an opportunity to take over the responsibility of developing and managing the tea bushes in the estate.

3. This is also an opportunity for the estate workers to improve their material benefits.

4. The system improves the status of the estate workers dignity and assets.

5. The system not only paves the way for involvement of male workers in the estate jobs but it also allows them to continue their residence in the estate sector as a dignified community.

The challenges

Under the outgrowing system only the low yield old tea bushes have been distributed to the workers. However, much applied the agronomic practice by the outgrowers, the productivity will be limited and thus not in a position to enhance their income.

1. There is suggestion to distribute 5000 tea bushes per person on long lease. However, none of the estate has considered the suggestion. Thus, the status of outgrowers involved in productivity-based wage model does not significantly differ from the existing workers in the wage base model in the plantation sector.

2. That system is a tendency of mobilizing and manipulating labour for the benefits of the estate as identified in the previous study carried out by K.T.Silva et al in 2007 is still valid.

3. Most of the outgrowers that the research team interacted with are keeping the records of in and out of their activities. Most of them believe the status of their involvement

recorded in the estate or agencies is appropriate and try to depend on that.

4. The outgrowers, particularly living in the Mahauva estate are not entitled for EPF and ETF which are the major savings of the estate workers and giving them benefits at the retirement. Thus, the outgrowers have the risk at their retirement stage.

5. The plantation system has covered the statutory social security system such as provision of housing, determination of wages, provision of compensation for hazards while working in the estate, EPF/ ETF etc. The estate manager is the responsible person for implementing the aforesaid system in the estate. These statutory systems are not provided for non-workers. Therefore, an appropriate mechanism should be provided to the outgrowers to be linked to the public administrative system of the country.

Part II

Repatriation of Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka

The repatriation of migrant Indian Tamil community who have mainly engaged as labourers in the plantation sector was a political decision of the successive governments after independence of Sri Lanka. Their result led to the enactment of the two Citizenship Acts in 1948 and 1949. Accordingly, the Indian Tamils were disfranchised as a rendered as stateless community in Sri Lanka. The negotiations between New Delhi and Colombo took sixteen years to solve the problem

of statelessness of around 1 million Indian Tamils in the country It finally culminated in the signing of the Indo-Ceylon agreement in 1964. As a result, India agreed to grant citizenship to 525,000 and Sri Lanka to 300,000 persons of Indian origins with their natural increase. The balance 150,000 continued as stateless in the country. The fact that, 625,000 applied for Sri Lankan citizenship and only 400,000 for Indian citizenship shows that majority of them did not wish to leave Sri Lanka. Subsequently, applications for Indian citizenship increased from 400,000 to 487,000 when 87,000 persons, (whose applications for Sri Lankan citizenship were rejected,) applied for Indian citizenship. According to the Sri Lankan government a total of 459,000 of people were repatriated under the provision of the above pact. The number left out as stateless and their natural increase of 94,000 were granted Sri Lankan citizenship in January 1986. It should be noted that the government of Sri Lanka enacted another legislation in 1988 confer citizenship on all those (of Indian origin) lawfully resident in Sri Lanka, who had not applied for Indian citizenship and who were deemed to be stateless. The enactment brought an end to the agonizing era of statelessness in Sri Lanka (Vedavalli.L.,1994)

Aftermath of repatriation

Majority of the estate workers who obtained the Indian citizenship and repatriated were relatively very influential families and could be categorized as elite tea workers on the estates. Many of the elites belonged to upper caste families in the estates. Repatriation of those elites created a gap in

terms of continuity of several cultural practices in the estates and a lull persisted until the 1990s. Though the upper caste communities lived with the other lower castes, they did not very much associate with the lower caste community in terms of performance of cultural activities in the estates. It took several years for the emergence of new leadership in the estates after the repatriation of upper caste community. Coincidently, the nationalisation of estate schools in the 1980s and the expansion of opportunities for outside work for the educated youth paved the way for new leadership in the estates. Subsequently, a new culture also emerged amongst the estate community which mostly harmonised with the Sinhalese. Provision of education and opportunities for the lower caste plantation youth to associate with the Sinhalese as compared to the upper caste Indian Tamils living in the urban areas has led to the emergent of a uniquely new community in the country.

Several development programmes like the distribution of land to landless communities for growing tea and housing programmes have been implemented during the last two decades by successive governments, but the benefits have not reached significantly to the Indian Tamil tea estate workers in the country. Many of them are living in very old line rooms which were constructed during the British time. At present the line rooms are owned by the privatized tea estate owners and labour is provided for the tasks performed on a daily basis.

Apart from the economic vulnerability, the Indian Tamils living in the estates were also severely affected by the ethnic conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Tamil

separatists of the North and the East. Undoubtedly, Indian Tamils are not part of these separatist movements. But many people living in the South cannot distinguish them from those living in the North and East. On several occasions, there were Indian Tamil causalities by the armed forces in the war front. This situation prevailed for the last thirty years beginning from the1980s.

Several of the Indian Tamils living in the districts of Ratnapura, Kegalle, Kalutara, Galle and Badulla are fluent in the Sinhala language and fascinatingly they use the language even amongst their own family members. Indeed, the orientation of Sinhala was liberally used during the crucial North and East war in order to conceal their Tamil identity in public places. Moreover, they also follow several customs and habits as the Sinhalese For example, in the Southern province, the Devasam ritual of the Hindu religion has been converted to Dhana Gethra in Buddhism and all associated Buddhist rituals are followed. An interesting observation is that the language the Indian Tamils in the south commonly use for calling their children is different from that of the Indian Tamils living elsewhere. Indian Tamils call a son Putha instead of Magan. Likewise, the daughter is called as Duwa instead of Magal. Several of the Tamil women are wearing Sinhalese dresses for ceremonies like weddings etc. It should be noted that there is no evidence to prove any institutional arrangement or other means to announce on conversion of the Indian Tamils into Sinhalese even during the crucial war period by the Sinhalese or Buddhist monks in the Southern province.
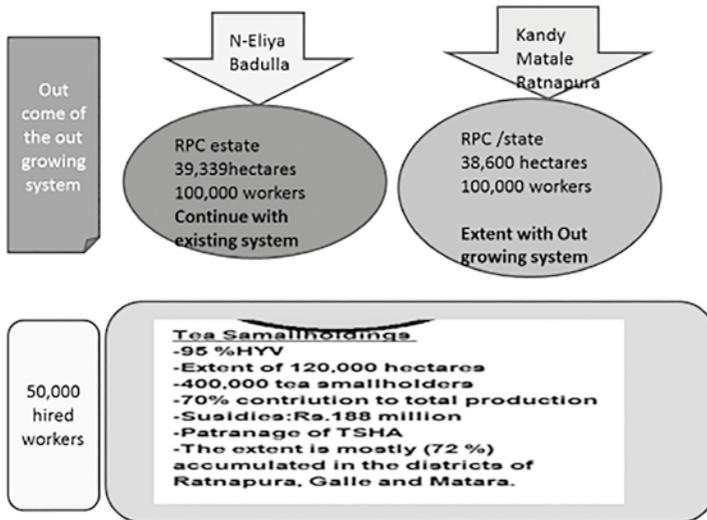
Conclusion and suggestions

As far as the distribution of varieties of tea bushes is concerned, the high yielding varieties are largely concentrated in the High Grown regions and Low Grown tea in the country. In contrast, the tea region of Mid Grown region mainly consists of old type of seedling tea bushes which give low productivity than other varieties in other two regions. Managing these seedling tea bushes by the respective RPC is a costly effort and a considerable extent of these areas were diversified with various crops which certain areas were brought under reforestation activities in the country. Indeed, the remaining tea areas are now transferred to the outgrowing model. It is also evidently proved that the study conducted in 2007 by Silva et al. in the Elkaduwa and the study on Selagama by Shamalie et al. and the present study covering the tea estates of Mahauva and Enthana are mainly laying in the Mid Grown tea region with low yielding tea bushes.

It should be noted that none of the high yielding varieties has been considered for the outgrowing model. An interview with a leading personnel who has a thorough knowledge about the tea sector who has immensely contributed for the tea research in the country reveals that the outgrowing model with only the old tea bushes cannot be successful and he categorically says that the model should not be accepted unless it becomes into a formal system. Otherwise a fair distribution of high yielding tea bushes to the out grower could be another possible alternative.

However, the transition which takes place in the Mid Grown Tea region is definitely influencing the plantation community and it will also pave the way for the emergence of a new social

group in the country. The diagram below gives various type of tea sector created in the plantation sector and the distribution of plantation community in Sri Lanka.

Out come of the out growing system

N-Eliya
Badulla

Kandy
Matale
Ratnapura

RPC estate
39,339hectares
100,000 workers
Continue with
existing system

RPC /state
38,600 hectares
100,000 workers

Extent with Out
growing system

50,000 hired workers

Tea Samallholdings
-95 %HYV
-Extent of 120,000 hectares
-400,000 tea smallholders
-70% contriution to total production
-Susidies:Rs.188 million
-Patranage of TSHA
-The extent is mostly (72 %) accumulated in the districts of Ratnapura, Galle and Matara.

The study highlights the multidimensional status of the Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Indian Tamils who migrated have adjusted to a new economic order of plantation system in Sri Lanka. Large number of the Indian Tamils are still living in large-scale housing schemes of the plantation sector in the country. The rest are living in cities as a business community and in the rural sector elsewhere in the island. Among them the people who are living in the tea smallholding sector in the Southern province are the most vulnerable community. The business community of Indian Tamils relatively continue their strong relationship with their ancestral villages in South India. But it is not the case with Indian Tamils living off the plantation

sector. The study shows that they have preserved most of their cultural identity as Indian Tamils. However, the Pact of 1964 and ethnic violence made a significant impact on their cultural identity in the country. The study also highlights the hardships affecting the cultural identity of Indian Tamils living in the Southern province and the adaptation to the Sinhalese culture. It seems that their becoming a new inclusion in the existing Sinhalese society is inevitable. Hence, Indian Tamils need a very strong institutional support to retain their traditional culture and their identity as Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Suggestions

- Institutional support for the outgrowers

- Integration of the outgrowing farmers into GN and DS divisions

- Integration of the outgrowing farmers with tea smallholding sector

- Constant training

- Promotion of cultural activities

- Annual exhibition

- Regular cultural activities

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Post-War Political Aspirations and Mobilisation of Hill Country Tamils in the North-East of Sri Lanka
by
P. Muthulingam

Introduction

This chapter is intended to cast light on the emerging aspirations of Hill Country Tamils in the North and the East of Sri Lanka. It is based on oral stories, testimonies and focus group discussions conducted among the Hill Country Tamil community living in Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. Following the change of government in 2015, the Kandy-based Institute of Social Development (ISD) began to identify people's perceptions on transitional justice and reconciliation by conducting focus group discussions with the community and civil society of the North and the East. Eighty oral histories were recorded by trained enumerators through ten community discussions.

Based on these discussions, I have drawn the conclusion that the issues of the community who identified themselves as 'Indian Tamils' or *Malaiyaha Thamilar* are different from those of 'Sri Lankan Tamils'; and that they are excluded from inclusion as 'Sri Lankan Tamils'. This is a preliminary study on this community – and it opens up further avenues to explore the issues and the aspirations of Hill Country Tamils in the North and the East from different aspects – with the main argument that this group has evolved into a distinct Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

Historical Background

The ancestors of the present generation of 'Indian Tamils', currently called *Malaiyaha Thamilar* ('Hill Country Tamils') migrated during the colonial period to toil in the coffee and later tea, rubber and coconut plantations. This migration commenced in 1824 and came to an end in 1941. The labour force formed an extremely vulnerable group, drawn from the poorest and the lowest castes in the Tamil speaking districts of Madras Presidency in neighbouring South India (Jayawardena and Kurian, 2015).

Initially the Tamil labourers worked in the coffee and tea plantations; and later with the emergence of townships, a section were employed as sanitary and other low-status jobs in town councils and municipalities. Simultaneously, a small section of Tamils and North Indian traders, who voluntarily migrated, settled down as traders in the townships. In 1931, when the British introduced universal franchise to then Ceylon, it was extended to 'Indian Tamils' amidst the opposition of Sinhala political leaders. By 1936, the number of Indian voters had risen to 145,000, electing two Indian representatives to the State Council (Jayawardena and Kurian, 2015). The position of 'Indian Tamils' was further strengthened with the introduction of the Soulbury Constitution in 1947. The Soulbury Constitution paved the way to elect 7 'Indian Tamil' members to the parliament in 1947.

However, the political representation of the community did not last long. Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948 and the post-independence government brought the Citizenship Acts in the

same year, depriving the 'Indian Tamils' of their citizenship rights. The post-independence government immediately followed up with several Acts which deprived 'Indian Tamils' of all rights they enjoyed as citizens. The most notable among them were, the Citizenship Act of 1948, the Indian and Pakistani Resident (Citizenship) Act of 1949 and the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act of 1949 which deprived the great majority of the 'Indian Tamil' residents of Sri Lanka of their citizenship rights and franchise (De Silva, 1981). The disenfranchisement disappointed the community which had intended to settle in the country as permanent residents or citizens. Those who had property and close links with their country of origin left soon after the Citizenship Acts were passed. However, the vast majority decided to remain in Sri Lanka.

Migration to the North and the East

Push factor

The post-independence political environment further aggravated the condition of the Hill Country Tamils. In the 1956 general election campaign, the newly formed Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) under the leadership of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, launched propaganda campaigns against this community, raising a false alarm of a threat to the Sinhalese from 'Indian Tamils' – the majority of whom were poor plantation workers (Jayawardena and Kurian, 2015). The new SLFP government introduced the Official Language ('Sinhala Only') Act in 1956, which pushed the minority Tamil community to campaign

against it

While the Federal Party of North-Eastern origin Tamils, headed the campaign against the 'Sinhala Only' Act, the Minister of Transport Maithripala Senanayake introduced the Sinhala 'Sri' number plates to motor vehicles in the latter part of 1957. The Federal Party countered this action with an anti-Sinhala 'Sri' campaign. In the North, Tamil youths introduced Tamil Sri instead of Sinhala Sri.

As the anti-'*Sri*' campaign gained momentum in the North and the East, Hill Country Tamils were drawn into it. In some places like Talawakelle, Tamil youth defaced Sinhala street names with black tar. In Bogawantalawa, a few youths gathered at the entrance of an estate and stopped all passing vehicles with Sinhala *Sri* number plates and painted tar over the '*Sri*.' The police arrested the youth and locked them up. Estate workers gathered in thousands opposite the Bogawantalawa police station, demanding their release. Police opened fire, killing a worker named Ayyavu Francis. The enraged estate workers attacked Sinhalese-owned shops and buildings and even assaulted some Sinhala passers-by. After local Sinhalese retaliated, Tamils then barricaded the roads with huge stones, and using trees which they felled, they obstructed the police (Sabaratnam, 1990).

Following this incident, an ethnic riot occurred in 1958 where a Sinhalese mob attacked some Hill Country Tamils. This created fear among the Hill Country Tamils who lived close to Sinhala villages. The ethnic riots forced a section of the plantation workers, mainly from the Galle, Kalutara, Moneragala, Badulla

and Nuwara Eliya districts to migrate to the North with their families. Most of these migrants settled in the Vanni and Pullumalai area of Batticaloa district. Some bought lands and settled; and some lived on lands owned by the local Sri Lankan Tamils.

In the face of continued campaigns against the Indian Tamils by the Sinhala political parties, the Ceylon *Dravidar Munnetra Kazhagam* (CDMK), a social reform movement which had become popular among the Indian Tamil community during the sixties, campaigned for their citizenship.

In 1963, the CDMK organized a procession and conference in the Bandarawela town hall demanding citizenship for stateless Indian Tamils. The CDMK had invited the Federal Party leaders to address the gathering. A Sinhalese mob under the leadership of K. M. P. Rajaratne attacked the workers who were in the procession, and then the workers were retaliated. This culminated in ethnic riots in Bandarawela town and created a fear among the plantation workers of the district about their future. As a result, a considerable number of worker families in Bandarawela and Badulla migrated to the Eastern Province and settled down as agricultural labourers.

The 1963 ethnic riot was debated in the parliament. In the following year of 1964, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike left for India, and signed a pact with Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, to resolve the problem of the stateless 'Indian Tamil' community in Sri Lanka. India agreed to grant citizenship to 525,000 persons and Sri Lanka agreed to do the same for 300,000 persons. However, when the 'Sirima-

Shastri Pact' came to be implemented, 600,000 persons had applied for Sri Lankan citizenship and only 400,000 applied for Indian citizenship (Jayasinghe, 2002). This left a considerable number as stateless.

In the 1970s another mass exodus from the Hill Country took place due to the country's political situation. In the 1970s, a left coalition government came to power under Sirimavo Bandaranaike. The new government introduced the Land Reform Act in 1972, which nationalised the plantations, ostensibly to address the landlessness problem of Sinhala villagers. Following nationalisation, Sinhalese villagers who lived close to the tea and rubber estates entered the estates, and chased out the resident Tamil workers. Further, rising food prices which persisted from 1973 to 1975 adversely affected estate workers and some even starved to death. These incidents also pushed estate workers to move to the North and the East, seeking a better life. The ethnic riots of 1977, 1981 and 1983 further compelled estate workers to take refuge in the areas historically inhabited by the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Pull factor

A Northern NGO named *Gandhiyam* headed by Dr. Rajasundaram and S. A. David organised large farms in the Vanni district and called plantation workers to come and settle down there. At the same time, a number of left-inclined movements which came into existence in the North at this time, namely People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE),

Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), and Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) included the problems of Hill Country Tamils in their political agendas and also recruited the Hill Country youth into their movements. This became another pull factor for the migration, in which the youth who joined the movement inspired other Hill Country Tamils to migrate to the North and the East.

Settlements:

During the period from 1958 to 1960, Hill Country Tamil internal migrants began resettling in the North by clearing lands close to the A9 Vavuniya-Kilinochchi road, while some settled in the private lands owned by local Tamils. Those who migrated to the Eastern province settled on both sides of the Badulla-Chenkaladi road. These settlements in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa were named as *purams* and *nagars*. The places where the Hill Country Tamils have relocated in the North and the East with their respective village names are listed below in Tables 01-06 (data from field study in 2016-2017).

Table 01 : Batticaloa District

No	DS Division	GN Division
1	Eravur pattu	Vipulanathapuram
2	Eravur Pattu	Sivapuram
3	Eravur Pattu	Mylampaveli
4	Chengaladdi	Marappalam
5	Chengaladdi	Mavaiarru
6	Chengaladdi	Kopaveli
7	Chengaladdi	Pullumalai
8	Chengaladdi	Kittul
9	Vavunaththivu	Rasathurai nagar
10	Manmunai west	Ganthi nagar
11	Koraipathu South - Kiran	Punanai
12	Karaipathu South - Kiran	Mylanthennai

Table 2: Trincomalee district

No	DS Divisions	GN Division
1	Kuchaveli	Kallampathai
2	Trinco Town	Kappalthurai
3	Muthur	Puliyadicholai
4	Kaniya	Mangaiuttru
5	Kaniya	Peeliyadi
6	Muttur	Kumarapuram

Table 3 : Kilinochchi district

Karachchi DS Division			
No.	*GN Division*	*No.*	*GN Division*
1	Anaivilunthan	14	Thondamannagar
2	Kannagaipuram	15	Ambalnagar
3	Skanthapuram	16	Ambalkulam
4	Barathipuram	17	Kanakampilaikulam
5	Kriushnapuram	18	Periyaparanthan
6	Ramanathapuram	19	Puthumuraipu
7	Ananthapuram	20	Ottupalam
8	Malayalapuram	21	Akkarayan
9	Ratnapuram	22	Konavil
10	Selvanagar	23	Uthayangar East
11	Ponnagar	24	Uthayangar West
12	Vivegananthar	25	Kili Town
13	Maruthanagar	26	Pannankandy

Table 4: Mullaitivu district

No	Pudukudiruppu DS	No	Mullaitivu DS
	GN Division		*GN Division*
1	Puthukudierrupu	1	Thiyodu Nagar
2	Devepuram	2	Mullaitivu
3	Maanikapuram	3	Sillavathi
4	Suthanthirapuram	4	Mulliyavalai
5	Illangkopuram	5	Kokilai
6	Valluvarpuram	6	Thaneerotturu
7	Barathipuram	7	Kokkuthoduvaai
8	Vallipuram		
9	Irruttumadu		
10	Theravil		

			Oddusuddan DS
11	Nethiliaaru		*GN Division*
12	Mannangkandal	1	Muththayan Kattu (01)
13	Kaiveli North	2	Muththayan Kattu (02)
14	Puthukudierrupu Nagar	3	Kat Silai medu
15	Vennavil	4	Oddusuddan
16	Kuravaiyal		
17	Irranipaalai		
18	Manduvil		
19	Kaiveli – East		

Table 5: Mannar district

No	Manthai West DS	No	Nanattan DS
	Village name		*Village name*
1	Periyamadhu	1	Madukulam
2	Kayanagar		
3	Eekilawatte		
4	Adampan		
	Mannar DS		*Madhu DS*
	Village name		Village name
1	Talaimannar Pier	1	Mullikulam
2	Padapadi	2	Iranai Illupaikulam
		3	Periyapandivirichchan

Table 6: Vavuniya district

No	Vavuniya South Tamil DS	No	Settikulam DS
	GN Division		*GN Division*
1	Kanthapuram	1	Veerapuram
2	Ganeshapuram	2	Ganeshapuram
3	Katpagapuram		
4	Samayapuram		**Vavuniya North Tamil DS**
5	Manipuram		*GN Division*
6	Sundharapuram	1	Raasapuram
7	Eeshwaripuram		
8	Bharathipuram		
9	Vinayagapuram		
10	Sivapuram		
11	Sriramapuram		
12	Sidhambarapuram		
13	Aachipuram		

This naming pattern seems to have a significant influence in framing a distinctive identity for Hill Country Tamils those who settled shortly after ethic riots and structured violence. These names were given by locally influential persons in the areas where they had substantial control over land – subsequently, landowners used newly settled people as their subordinates to get agricultural and other work done. This naming also provides a different perception to native Tamils in the area in terms of caste, identity and social background. More importantly, this naming pattern remains a significant factor for various forms of exclusion such as exclusions in social development, access to governance structures, land ownership and other welfare rights.

North-Eastern Tamil armed organisations, principally the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam Peoples' Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) focused their attention towards increasing the Tamil population in the Northern part of Sri Lanka, to counteract state-sponsored Sinhala colonisation of those areas, by creating settlements of Hill Country Tamils in border areas of the Vanni district. The PLOTE, EPRLF and TELO created a few settlements close to Vavuniya town. These settlements were named as *Kudiyiruppu*. Meanwhile, the *Gandhiyam* non-governmental organisation created larger farms and human settlements. These settlements located in the border areas named as Kent farm and Dollar farm were in Nedunkerni, Netuvagai, Neriyakulam, Kappachi, Musalkutti and Thetkkuilupaikulam (Poompurgar).

Most of the Hill Country Tamils who were settled by the militant groups subsequently sold their lands and left for other areas. This was caused by several factors: firstly, the lands were closer to the main road and the land value was rising, therefore, locals were keen to purchase the land. Secondly, due to extreme poverty and hunger, the settlers were pushed to sell their lands. Thirdly, the geographical location of the land itself caused security issues which created a sense of fear among this people and eventually pushed them to sell the lands. Later, they also found lands in interior areas for their settlements. Other Hill Country Tamils who migrated to the North were asked by locals to settle in the barren land on the upper side of lakes and dams (see Appendix 1). These settlers were unable to engage in cultivation due to the lack of water. As a result, they became agricultural labourers working on the lands of local Tamils.

Post war scenario

Initially attracted by Tamil nationalism, the call from the left-inclined EPRLF, PLOTE and EROS, led some Hill Country youth to join their organisations. Later, TELO also recruited Hill Country Tamil youth. After the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) gained hegemony and momentum among the militant groups through killing the leaders and cadre of their rivals in the latter part of the 1980s, the Hill Country youth who were with those organisations were forcefully conscripted into the LTTE (which demanded that each family give one or more of their children to the 'movement' as it called itself). According to 'Kutti Mama' (alias Rajendran) of Pannangkandy, father of an LTTE suicide cadre (or 'black tiger'), nearly 12 thousand Hill Country Tamil youth participated in the war under the LTTE leadership (interview by author).

In contrast, some children of the Hill Country Tamil families were able to continue their education and found employment in the North as government servants, such as teachers, clerks, *grama niladharis*, and Development Officers. Soon after the war ended, the government initiated some infrastructure development projects, such as road construction, livelihood schemes for the poor and small-scale water supply schemes. However, these programmes did not reach the *Purams*. Most of the development projects were limited to the old (native) Tamil villages. This discrimination created dissent among the educated youth and politically motivated and concerned community members of the Hill Country Tamils resettled in the North.

Mr. Thangarasa of Malaiyala Puram, Kilinochchi said "I was born in Matale and came to Kilinochchi in 1977 and settled down by clearing the virgin forest along with others. Later the settlement was named as Malaiyala Puram. Like the natives, our children also participated in the war, and we suffered a lot like others. There are so many *Maaveerar* families [LTTE combatants who lost their lives in the war] in our village. Every family contributed to the struggle by sending one family member. Soon after the war ended the government introduced some development projects to rebuild the destroyed villages. However, all those projects were implemented in the old villages where the local people lived. Our villages which were named as *Purams* were excluded. Whenever we question government officers, they say you all are "*Vandan Varaththan*" (newcomers) and we give priority to the old villages, we will give priority to the *Ooran* (Natives). Even the employment opportunities were given to the local Tamils. Sometimes they say, you all are *Indiakaran* (Indians) or *Malaiyahaththan* (Hill Country origin)."

Mr. Thirunavukkarasu of Vavuniya, said; "Most of the government officers sideline our issues. They give priority to the old villages while the *Purams* are totally ignored. If government projects come, they are diverted to the old villages and not to the *Purams*. We have submitted a number of requests to the Divisional Secretariat relating to drinking water, roads and water for cultivation. But none of our requests has been attended to, the reason we have been told is that we are *Malayahaththan*".

Ms. Maheswary of Marappalam from Batticaloa said, "Our village has been totally neglected. We settled down in this area after the 1983 riots. We had property in Nuwara Eliya which we lost during the ethnic violence. We came here to live with the Tamil people, but the officers treat us like aliens. Whatever [development] projects come, the officers use to give them to old villages. There is no drinking water facility and pipe-borne water has been given to others."

Mr. John of Unnichchai, Batticaloa said "I came to Unnichchai after the 1983 riots. We cleared the jungle and started *chena* cultivation. Later, other estate families also came and settled down here. When the war ended, the local MPs implemented some development projects close to our areas but none was extended to our village. Very recently, they have laid pipelines to provide water. But they have stopped work at the point where it reaches our village. We live adjoining the Unnichchai tank but the water is supplied to far away towns and villages, and not to us. When we approach the MPs and other respective officers, they do not respond to our requests favourably."

These cases were derived from two different provinces and districts and they clearly indicate a simple message, that is, they have been excluded both by public officials and peoples' representatives in all development projects in the name of their identity and place of residence.

This further indicates a form of dual discrimination where they had already been discriminated by the successive governments when they were in the Southern part of the country, and later by those they regarded as fellow Tamils with whom they have been living for years in the Northern part of the island. Though they have four decades of history in the region and participated in the Tamil armed struggle, they are apparently left out in post-war rehabilitation and development. One could argue this to be institutional and social discrimination.

Emerging Political Patterns: The Demand for Candidature in General Election and Local Government

Due to the considerable literacy rate among the Hill Country Tamil community in the Vavuniya district than others in the North and East, Hill Country Tamils in that district were more organised and outspoken than elsewhere. In the 2010 general election, some of the potential leaders united to demand political representation from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for their constituency. The TNA leadership offered a candidature to represent the Hill Country Tamils of the Vavuniya district, taking into consideration the large number of votes of the Hill Country Tamil community, but the candidate Mr. Sellathurai did not win the election.

Following the 2010 general election, the local government election was held in 2011, the Hill Country Tamils formed an independent group and voiced their demands to the TNA. Considering the emerging organised representation and their

numbers, the TNA and other northern Tamil parties decided to give candidateship to the Hill Country Tamils. In Kilinochchi the main TNA constituent, the *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi* (ITAK), had given candidateship to the Hill Country Tamils who are numerically dominant in the Karachchi *Pradeshiya Sabha* (PS) area. At the same time, the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) also nominated Hill Country Tamil candidates. On behalf of the ITAK, four were elected and on behalf of the EPDP, one person was elected as a PS member.

In Vavuniya, five candidates were elected to the *Pradeshiya Sabha*. One member each was elected from three smaller constituents of the TNA, namely EPRLF, PLOTE and TELO; while on behalf of the UNP one candidate was elected, and another candidate was elected on behalf of the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) for the Vavuniya South Tamil *Pradeshiya Sabha*. Unlike in the plantation areas, the Hill Country Tamils political support base is relatively fragile in the North and they form a majority only in certain electorates where they were forced to align with TNA's constituent partners to run for election. Further, they had also to seek tickets from different parties in addition to TNA, as there was apparent dislike among party leaders to provide multiple nominations due to their identity and social background. As these parties were in a position to increase their vote base, they granted Tamils of Hill Country origin an opportunity to contest in electorates where that community were numerically significant. However, the emergent representation in the *Pradeshiya Sabhas* encouraged the community to demand their quota and right to representation in other political institutions such as the

provincial councils.

Later in the 2013 Provincial Council election, a group of people under the leadership of Mr. M. P. Nadarasa who is an Education Officer in Vavuniya district approached the TNA leadership and demanded candidateship for the Northern provincial council. The EPRLF and TELO nominated one individual each from that community under the TNA banner. Mr. Nadarasa who was fielded by the EPRLF obtained 10,800 votes but lost winning a seat by 1,000 votes. His supporters asked him to demand a 'bonus seat': one of the additional seats allocated to the leading parties on the basis of the total number of votes received. Mr. Nadarasa accompanied by a group of supporters met with EPRLF leader Mr. Suresh Premachandran to request a bonus seat, considering the vote bank of the Hill Country Tamils, who are a distinct Tamil community. The EPRLF leadership declined the demand. Later the same group met the leadership of the TNA with the same request. The TNA leadership positively responded and agreed to grant a one-year term to ensure representation of the Hill Country Tamil in the Council.

Thus in 2015, Mr. M. P. Nadarasa became the first Hill Country Tamil to gain membership of the Northern Provincial Council. In his maiden speech, he stated:

> "To obtain this Provincial Council, 50,000 combatants have laid down their lives and somewhere around 125,000 civilians have died. At the same time, we were linked to Tamil Nadu through the umbilical cord and also to some of the people who died. The Hill Country Tamils joined many struggles in many ways and sacrificed their children

to the struggle. Although we are united in the northern zone as Tamils, I should state that various problems have arisen from time to time affecting the Tamils who have settled here from the Hill Country, as well as directly from India. I conclude stating that everything should be done to integrate all Indian-origin Tamil people living here into our society without consideration of religion or race. Thank you for giving me the opportunity (Hansard, 2015).

While serving as Provincial Council Member Mr. Nadarasa requested the TNA leadership to extend his tenure but this was turned down. This incident further strengthened the suspicion among and a feeling of antagonism on the Hill Country Tamils about the credibility of the Northern Tamil leadership *vis-à-vis* their community together with previous acts. As I have argued elsewhere in this chapter, the Hill Country Tamils have had a long history of experiencing various forms of discrimination and exclusion in the sphere of land rights, occupations, settlements, agriculture, and access to public services, social development by the native Tamils; culminating in denial of democratic and political rights of this people to represent their own community in various political institutions. This has had a detrimental effect on the trust and fraternity this people had on native Tamils.

Thus, long-standing discrimination and various forms of exclusions in the name of identity, e.g. Indian Origin Tamils or Hill Country Tamils led this community to create a widespread discourse on reconfiguring their identity so as to enjoy rights

on par with native Tamils. This community was compelled to re-think its identity. This was reflected in the Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms (CTF) meetings held in 2016 in different parts of the North and the East. People from Vavuniya, Kilinochchi and Batticaloa voiced their grievances collectively at the CTF meetings as *Malayaika Tamilar*.

This consciousness was further strengthened by the 2016 country visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Ms. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye. A group of people met the Special Rapporteur, under the leadership of M. P. Nadarasa, representing the districts of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya and raised the issue of their exclusion from North-Eastern Tamil society. The meeting with the UN expert gave a boost to this group to form a forum called the North-East *Malayaika Makkal* Forum in March 2017. Following their consolidation, the group submitted a memorandum on the issues and demands of Hill Country Tamils, to the Chief Minister of the Northern Province. This memorandum covered the fundamental issues that affect this community together with challenges that they encounter from locals.[2]

Conclusion

The identity crisis among the Hill Country Tamil migrants in the North and the East is a result of political and social exclusion. The people who migrated to the North and the East believed that they would be accepted by local Tamils without discrimination. However, although this group of people speak

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2 See the memorandum in the annexure for more details.

the same language and practice the same religion and culture, the local 'Sri Lankan Tamils' would not allow the Hill Country Tamils to have territorial rights. It does not mean that the Hill Country Tamils are unable to mingle with natives – there are a few examples where the former has got married to latter and have been maintaining a close relationship over the years on various matters including business, agriculture and community work, and so forth.

That section of the Hill Country Tamils who were repatriated to South India under the Sirima-Shastri Pact during the 1970 to 1984 period also struggled to assimilate into the Tamil community in India. Although the Hill Country Tamils have close links with Tamil Nadu people in relation to language, religion, and culture, the locals in South India identified the repatriates as *Ceylon Karan* ('Ceylonese') or *Kandikaran* ('Kandyans').

The educated strata that migrated to Tamil Nadu soon after the 1983 ethnic riots recognised this identity crisis and initiated action to claim the identity of *Malaiyaha Thamilar* (Hill Country Tamil). Ira Sivalingam, a radical leader who migrated soon after the communal violence to Tamil Nadu, created a movement called *Malaiyaha Maru Valvu Mandram* (Hill Country Rehabilitation Centre) and in the cities of Kotagiri and Ooty established *Malaiyaha Thamilar* identity movements by mobilising the repatriates. The plight of the Hill Country Tamils who resettled in Tamil Nadu even after nearly three decades, shows that habitation for a long period in a country or a territory alone does not qualify one to be accepted as an

equal and integral part of the local community to all intents and purposes. While the children born in India of repatriates from Sri Lanka identify themselves as Indian and mingle with the local community, their settlements are still called 'Ceylon Colony'.

This experience is true of the Hill Country Tamils who migrated to the North and the East as well. The empirical evidence shows that though there are some cases where we could see inter-marriages, business and agricultural activities between Hill Country Tamils and locals, still a larger segment of this community remains unintegrated and unaccepted as equals by the locals owing to their identity and social background. I could observe this pattern in villages where the Hill Country Tamils former form a majority and when comparing the socio-economic status of both communities. Namely, caste, profession, social status, family background, place of residence and dialect and some social and religious practices continue to remain barriers in integrating this community with locals or in locals accepting this community as equals.

Although the Hill Country Tamils speak the Tamil language and practice the same culture, they also differ from the Tamils of the North and the East. Their dialects are different. Cultural practices too can differ. The generation of Hill Country origin Tamils in the North and East can mingle with the native youth of the North and East and even identify as Eelam Tamil. However, based on field studies of the contemporary community, the new generation too may continue to be identified by others as Hill Country Tamils (*Malaiyaha Thamilar)*. This is likely to be determined by the emerging socio-political environment; in

which the North-East *Malaiyaha Tamilar* forum could play an important part.

Earlier version of this paper was published in an edited volume entitled "Upcountry Tamils: charting a new future in Sri Lanka" which did not contain the Annexures give in this article.

* P. Muthulingam is Executive Director of the Institute for Social Development, Kandy.

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APPENDIX 1

Lager settlements upper side of the Lakes or Dams

a) **Kilinochchi District**

Villages	*Lakes/Dams*
Shanthapuram	Iranaimadu Dam
Dharmapuram	Kalmdukulam
Ambalkulam	Ambalkulam/minor
Selvanagar	Kandankulam/ Pudukulam
Puthumurippu	Puthumurippu kulam
Uttrukulam	Puthumurippukulam
Malyalapuram	
Bharathipuram	
Krishnapuram	
Ponnagar	
Udyanagar	

b) Vavuniya District

Villages	Lakes/Dams
Ganeshapuram	Nellukulam/Palamakalkulam
Samayapuram	Nellukulam
Manipuram	Pambaimadukulam
Madukulam	Madukulam
Poombukar	Poombukarkulam
Sri Rampuram	Mahairambailkum/Irambivettikualam
Annanagar	Kaththarsinnkulam
Sithambarapuram	Asikulam
Kannati Ganeshapuram	Kannattikulam
Barathypuram	Barathypuramkulam

Source field study 2016/2017

APPENDIX 2 : Memorandum Submitted to the NPC Chief Minister

வட மாகாண மலையக மக்கள் ஒன்றியம்

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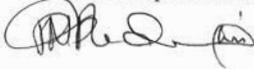
Nothern Province Malayaha Makkal Forum

21st March 2017

Hon. Canagasabapathy Viswalingam Wigneswaran

Chief Minister

Northern Provincial Council

Kandy Road

Kaithady

Hon. Sir,

Memorandum of Malayaha Makkal

We, the representatives of Malayaha Makkal who live in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka would like to submit the attached memorandum for your perusal to seek remedies for the problems faced by the underprivileged Malayaha Makkal community who live in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka and to prevent continuous exclusion from the development process initiated by the Northern Provincial Council and National Government.

On behalf of the representative committee

M.P Nadarajah

Former Provincial Council Member

265 , Aravelakethanam , Pandarikulam, Vavuniya

வட மாகாண மலையக மக்கள் ஒன்றியம்

Malayaha Makkal Forum of Northern Province

The recent Indian Origin Tamils currently called as the Hill Country Tamils were brought by the British to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century as indentured labourers to work initially in the coffee plantation and later in tea and rubber plantations. The first recorded batch of indentured labourers came in 1824. Even though the local regarded them as alien community, the British treated them as British citizens. With the introduction of franchise in 1931 by the British, the franchise was given to the Hill Country Tamils. Until 1948, they enjoyed the right of citizenship although they were kept as a captive labour force. With the disenfranchisement in 1948, they faced discrimination in socio-economic, health and education, housing, water supply, sanitation, employment and were deprived of political representation in people assemblies. Overall, they were handicapped economically, socially since independence. They were the most oppressed community in Sri Lanka though they contributed immensely to the national economy by working under the most difficult and inhuman conditions.

The worst blow for the Hill Country Tamils was on the very year of Sri Lankan independence, 1948, when they were rendered stateless by passing the Ceylon Citizenship Act depriving citizenship to the Hill Country Tamils who lived in the country for several generations. This loss was followed in the next year by the Ceylon Elections Amendment Act depriving voting rights to those Hill Country Tamils who constituted about 13% of the population. The Hill Country Tamils were left without a political voice. In 1964, the Sri Lankan government signed a pact with Indian government called Srima- Sastri to grant citizenship for a section of the community. Due to continuous agitation, the government had brought number of amendments time to time to solve the stateless problem. Finally, in 2003 an amendment was brought to solve the stateless problem of the community.

In this context, due to the repeated ethnic riots in Southern Sri Lanka in 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983, the innocent Hill Country Tamils became victims of the riots, with their hopes of living peacefully in the South shattered. The affected Hill Country Tamils began to move, relocating themselves to the North and the East, while some migrated to other countries as refugees,

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especially thousands fleeing to India. Soon after the 1977 and 1983 riots, the Northern political parties and Civil Society Organizations called the affected Hill Country Tamils to settle in the North and the East. The Hill Country Tamils who have migrated to the Northern Province were given land in border areas close to forests and upper part of the lakes and tanks. The settlements were named as *Purams, Kulams* and *Nagars* in the North and the East.

Except for Ramanathapuram, Uruthirapuram and Skandapuram in the Kilinochchi district, in all four divisional secretariat divisions, a large number of Hill Country Tamils are residing. The Grama Niladhari divisions namely are Anaivilunthan, Kannagaipuram, Skanthapuram, Akkarayan, Konavil, Ponnagar, Barathipuram, Malayalapuram, Vivegananthanagar, Kirushnapuram, Uthayanagar East, Uthayanagar West, Ambalkulam, Selvanagar, Ananthapuram, Thondamannagar, Kanakampikaikkulam, Ambalnagar, Rathinapuram, Kili Town, Maruthanagar, Pannankandy, Periyaparanthan, Ottupulam, Puthumuripu, Mayawanoor and Punnainiravi, of Karachchi Division, Iyakkachchi of Pachchilaippalli division, Kumarapuram, Korakkankattu, Periyakulam, Kalmadunagar, Kumarasamypuram, Kallaru, Tharmapuram West and Tharmapuram East of Kandawalai division and Jeyapuram North, Jeyapuram South and Mulankavil of Poonakary division.

In the Vavuniya district, Hill Country Tamils are residing in Vavuniya Town, Thandikulam, Paddanichchipuliyankulam, Vavuniya North, Vairavapuliyankulam, Pandarikulam, Thonikal, Moonrumurippu, Nochchimoddai, Maharambaikulam, Kathasinnakulam, Kallikulam, Puthukulam, Paranaddakal, Rajendrankulam, Salambaikulam, Chekkaddipulavu, Velankulam, Nelukulam, Pampaimadu, Kalmadu, Marakkaranpalai, Sasthirikoolankulam, Eachchankulam, Koomankulam, Kanthapuram, Maruthamadu, Palamoddai, Maruthankulam, Semamadu, Maligai, Pantrikeythakulam, Omanthai, Arumugathanputhukulam, Mahilankulam, Elamaruthankulam, Asikulam, Rambaikulam, Samalankulam, Kovilkulam, Ganesapuram, and Velikulam Grama Niladhari divisions of Vavuniya Division, Rangethygama, Madukanda, Kalukunnammaduwa and Mahamylankulama Grama Niladhari divisions of Vavuniya South division, Andiyapuliyankulam, Periyathampanai, Periyakadu, Kannady, Piramanalankulam, Sooduventhapilavu, Kurukkalputhukullam, Kanthasamynagar, Pavatkulam Unit 5 and 6, Pavatkulam Unit 4, Pavatkulam Unit 2, Muthaliyakulam, Sinnasippikulam, Neriyakulam, Periyapuliyalankulam, Cheddikulam, Muhathankulam, Pavatkulam Unit 9 and 10,

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Christhavakulam and Kangankulam Grama Niladhari divisions of Vengalacheddikulam division and Unchalkaddy, Vedivaithakallu, Maruthodai, Paddikudiyiruppu, Katkulam, Nedunkerny South, Nedunkerny North, Olumadu, Mamadu, Kulavisuddan, Maraillupai, Paranthan, Ananthapuliyankulam, Sinnadampan, Nainamadu, Puliyankulam South, Puliyankulam North, Kanagarayankulam South, Kanagarayankulam North and Mannakulam of Vavuniya North division.

In Mullaitivu, Sirattickulam, Vadakadu, Ambalpuram, Palamottai, Vannivilankulam, Palapani, Thunukkai Division, and in Puthukudiyiruppu division, Puthukudiyiruppu East, Puthukudiyiruppu West, Mannikapuram, Valluwarpuram, Theravi, Udayarkattu South, Uddayarkattu North, Suthanthirapuram, Vallipunam, Devipuram, Kaively, Mallikaitivu, Venavil, Mannakandal, and Anandapuram. In Oddusudan division Mankulam, Thirumurgandy, Inddupuram, Sinnasalmban, Periyasalamban, Olumadu, Manwalanpattamuripu, Palampasi, and Thanduvan. In Karaithuraipattu division, Mullivaikal, Silawattai, Alambil, Semmalai, Ponnagar, Thaneerootru and Kokkilai,

In the Mannar district, the Hill Country Tamils are residing in Gayanagar, Nanattan, Murungan and Maddu.

Even when the Hill Country Tamils are residing in 40 Grama Niladhari divisions in the Kilinochchi district, 86 Grama Niladhari divisions in the Vavuniya district and 38 Grama Niladhari divisions in the Mullaitivu district, their voices remain unheard, their needs are unmet and they are excluded from all the benefits and services. This was even stated by the Chief Minister of the Northern Province in a speech delivered two years ago, in a public meeting at Krishnapuram, Kilinochchi. In his speech, he has requested the government officers, not to discriminate in delivering the available services and urged the authorities to take steps to reach out to this community and address their needs in order for them to also enjoy the services and the provisions similar to others in their divisions.

While the Hill Country Tamils continue to face discrimination and exclusion from the time of their arrival to the country and while also being the worst oppressed community, the State still continues to turn a blind eye to the hardships and problems faced by the people.

Across the North, even in the post war context, the Hill Country Tamils are still living in harsh conditions, dealing with significant economic marginalization, with limited livelihood opportunities, inadequate housing and without a political voice. The community has been sidelined for decades and faces major political, economic and social rights violations. It is crucial that this community does not continue to be sidelined or neglected.

In the Northern Province, the Hill Country Tamils consists of 40% of the population. During the 30 years of ethnic war, the Hill Country Tamils became part and parcel of the struggle. The youngsters of the community fought together with the youths of North during the war. The community had lost human resources and physical resources. However, soon after the war, some initiations were taken to provide infrastructure development by the government and provincial council. The said attempts excluded the Hill Country Tamils who lived in the Northern Province. Hence, the Hill Country Tamils live in the area with their distinguished cultural identity. The native Tamils also look at them as distinguished separate Tamil community.

Therefore, we the Hill Country Tamil community representatives bring the following to your consideration in order to ensure the inclusion of Hill Country Tamils to mainstream with the Northern native population.

Livelihood

The Hill Country Tamils were settled in the upper part of the lakes and tanks and are not in a position to engage in agriculture due to unavailability of water. This made them rely on others for agriculture or work as daily labourers in their lands. As a result, the community is unable to engage in agricultural cultivations which is their main livelihood. This resulted in them having no opportunity to increase their income. Although the community has lived over 30 years in the Northern Province, no irrigated lands were given to them for cultivation. Even the land titles were not given to the families who had voluntarily cultivated in some areas over a period of 20 years. Some settled in the land owned by the northerners under the middle-class schemes over 20 years. Now the people returning from other countries are requesting their lands back citing the recently passed Act. Hence the people who cleared the forest, cultivated, settled and have lived there for over 20 years were asked by the Sri Lankan Army and the Forest Department to

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evacuate. Further in some areas, the government has provided land holding certificate only for ½ an acre, where the people have cultivated more than 3 acres. At the same time, majority of the settlement does not possess drinking water facilities.

Therefore,

We request,

1. The Provincial Council and National Government to provide lift irrigation system for this community, especially to those living behind the lakes and tanks.

2. The government to grant landless families irrigated or possible lands for irrigation and cultivation.

3. The government to grant land ownership for the families who have already engaged in cultivation and settled down.

4. The Provincial Council to provide drinking water for the settlers who live in the *Purams*, *Kulams* and *Nagars*.

5. There are numbers old tanks existing in the Vavuniya district such as Vellaiparichakulam. These tanks to be renovated and the lands given to the Hill Country Tamils living in the vicinity.

Housing

Several housing schemes / projects were introduced to the North especially after the war, under various resettlement projects. Beneficiaries were selected through a government process and houses were provided for these beneficiaries. However, yet a large number of Hill Country Tamil families are living in the Northern Province were excluded. Soon after the war when the statistics were collected on housing needs, there were youngsters who lived with the parents and now are married and became separate families. When the government initiate to provide housing and housing loans, these new families were excluded. Further, banks are asking a government employee as a guarantor whenever they grant loans. The Hill Country Tamils do not have sufficient government employees; therefore, these people are unable to obtain loans.

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We request,

5. The government to give priority to the families whenever houses are provided for the needy who live in temporary sheds and huts in Vavuniya and Kilinochchi districts.

6. The government to conduct a new survey to grant houses for individual families. The government statistics immediately after the war showed single families with more members. However, these families have now become more than one family after marriage.

7. The government to take alternative measures related to guarantors to enable loan facilities for this community.

Education

The community was excluded from getting quality education. The schools located in the villages where majority are the Hill Country Tamils, lacked quality and sufficient teachers, teaching aids, basic physical resources and facilities for the school and managerial staff. Some schools only have up to certain grades and the children have to look for other schools to continue their education which exist far away and no transport facilities. As a result, the number of school drop outs has increased. Further due to their economic hardships the parents are not in a position to send their children to faraway schools. This has led to the poor level of education among this community.

We request,

7. Provincial Council to provide quality education for the Hill Country Tamils by ensuring the availability of adequate physical and human resources for the schools and proving transport facilities for the school children where the community is predominantly settled.

8. The authorities to promote the existing schools in the vicinity up to grade 10.

6

Political representation

Even though the Hill Country Tamils consist of 40% in the Northern Province, there is not a single political representation in the national, provincial and local government to represent the community and address their needs. A representative was nominated for the Provincial Council in the year 2014; however, his period was limited for a year and was never replaced and the Hill Country Tamils are left without a political voice. Further, there is also a lack of community representation in the District Coordinating Committee meeting for development planning.

We request,

9. The Northern political leadership to ensure the community has political representation at national, provincial and local governments.

10. The Northern political leadership to give priority for allocating candidates based on the population ratio of the Hill Country Tamils in provincial and local governments.

11. The Northern political leadership to consider the locations where the Hill Country Tamil population is dispersed and are unable to elect their representatives, to allocate seats for national, provincial and local governments under bonus seats.

12. The authorities to provide opportunities for the Hill Country Tamils to participate in the District Coordinating Committee meeting for development planning.

Employment

A large number of Hill Country Tamil youth are seen idling as they are not provided with employment or any support to follow vocational training programmes, which are conducted by various institutions. While there are provisions to provide eligible youth with employment and allocations for vocational training programmes, the opportunities were not made available for this community even for minor positions in the local government.

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We request,

10. The Provincial and the National authorities to provide minor employment opportunities for the educated Hill Country Tamil youth, who are not in a position to enter through merit, to be absorbed into provincial employment and the existing opportunities made available to them.

11. The government to ensure that minor employments opportunities are provided to the youth in the line ministries.

Infrastructure development

Majority of the villages where the majority of the Hill Country Tamils live, are not included into development programmes carried out by either the provincial council, central government or the local government. The villages lack basic infrastructure facilities such as proper roads, street lights, common buildings, playgrounds, cemetery etc.

The divisional secretariats, the Pradeshiya Sabhas and other government institutions consists of several benefits and services which can be accessed and enjoyed by the local communities such as income generation support programmes, trainings, grants, loans, micro credits, housing schemes, motivational activities, skill trainings, services for senior citizens, issuing of dry rations etc, not sufficiently extended to the villages where Hill Country Tamils lives.

We request,

12. The Provincial and the National authorities to identify and address the development needs of the Hill Country Tamils.

13. The Provincial and the National authorities to ensure the inclusion of the Hill Country Tamils as a focus group in divisional development plans.

8

On behalf of the Hill Country Tamils of Northern Province

1. M.P. Nadarajah – Ex-Provincial Council member

2. P. Subramaniam - Kilinochi

3. S.Thirugnam- Vavuniya -

4. S.Thangarasa – Killnochi

5. Y.Mathawarasa - Mullaitivu

6. Tharmapaskaran Yogeswary - PTK

7. K. Sathyapriya – Mannar

8. P.Nagenthiran – Mankulam/ Odisuttan

9. Ponnaiah Ratnam Vavuniya

10. Murukaiah Thamilchelvan – Kiliknochi

11. Niroshan Jayarani - Vavuniya

9

Hill Country Tamil Women in Trade Union and Politics and Emerging New Avenue

T. Kalaimagal
Development Specialist, Sri Lanka

> *'... gender and power are intrinsically linked; understanding this can help us understand both concepts better and*
>
> *creates the opportunity for more politically smart development… Power is not taken; it is given.*

Introduction

In the 150 years history, the Hill Country Tamil[3] Women have significantly contributed to Sri Lanka's Economic Growth, Evolution of Democracy and Social Changes. More than fifteen decades blended in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-language atmosphere, tireless progress and momentous achievements are made in entrepreneurship, academic field and other professions such as medical, engineering, accounting and so on. Approximately over 65 percent of total plantation population of the women are engaged in plucking tea leaf, the job which demands high level technical skills, stamina to stand for long hours and resistance to get exposed to natural

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3   The legacy of the estate sector in Sri Lanka dates back nearly 150 years. The British launched the coffee/tea industry in early Nineteenth Century with "imported" indentured labor from Southern India. Today's estate population are descendants of this labor, brought into the country until the 1940s. Ethnically this population is classified as Indian Tamils, as oppose to Sri Lankan Tamils who reside in the North and East of the country.

environment. In social upward mobility it is noteworthy to remember the remarkable contributions made by women towards the establishment and existence of trade unions and political institutions in this sector. It is noted in many documentations about women participation in demonstrations to preserve the sovereignty of the country, work place rights and human rights.

History of trade union linkages to political parties dates back to '1931 when Sri Lanka was granted universal franchise which elevated the status of workers as a group with the potential to obtain considerable political power and served as an incentive for aspiring politicians to enter the trade union movement. It is noteworthy that the Ceylonese workers gained the political right to vote before their trade union and industrial rights were legislatively recognized. It became that the right to vote should be used to obtain the right to organize by workers. Similarly, since the workers themselves had demonstrated their willingness by then to band together to achieve their demands, socialist political leaders turned to trade unionism as the main machinery to develop as support in strengthening political parties by mobilizing voters for their political parties. Thus, whilst unionization by the employees themselves did also came about, the major trade unions were organized by leaders of political parties. And even today Sri Lankan trade unions maintain linkages with political parties, both in government and in the opposition'[4] apart from free trade unions.

Trade unions in the Sri Lankan tea plantations are embedded

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4   Barriers to Women's Participation in Trade Unions by Shyamali Ranaraja, ILO Colombo, September, 2003.

in ethnic identity politics.[5] In the mid-2010s 'among plantation trade unions the new tendency emerged towards encouraging movement politics. While dominant unions remain focused on representative politics, some unions are reinforcing their movement politics by building alliances with other civil society actors. However, changing the male biased cultural practices within unions is vital not only for asserting women's voice but also for mobilizing the Hill Country Tamil community'. These alliances also reflect changes in labour internationalism or global labour solidarity, which highlight the need for a new orientation towards movement politics (Waterman, 2004). [6]

Although the plantation trade unions have well defined structure and have pledged to improve the conditions of women workers, women issues remain problematic within the trade unions themselves. Such declarations look good on paper but translating them into concrete action is another thing. Neither the establishment of women committee nor a well-drawn women's program in the unions guarantee that women's rights and other gender concerns will become priority agenda of the trade union movement and ensure equality.

5   Trade unions in the Sri Lankan tea plantations: Women worker struggles and ethnic identity politics Janaka Biyanwila University of Western Australia
6   As above

Where are women in trade unions and political movements?

'*…gender and power are intrinsically linked; understanding this can help us understand both concepts….*[7] Trade union and political movements are power centered; it is reflected in every level of decision making from local to center in organizing for membership. It is evident that in many struggles/or demonstrations women played a significant role in support of men at the policy level bargaining and changes. The status of Women Committees, especially at the local level, reflects the reality that women, are still very far on their way to women empowerment. Although women particularly workers remain marginalized, their collective struggle and negotiations/ actions at work place or grass root level, which had contributed to momentous decision makings at policy level remains unspoken. Decision-making bodies still are dominated by male leaders. As such, trade unions prioritize common issues rather than Those to specific women. This is manifested in minimal to none inclusion of programs for women in the regular planning of the

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[7]   If we think about gender, we're better at thinking and working politically. A gender perspective shows that how power and politics in the family shape power relations at all levels of society; how wider economic, political and social structures rely on and reproduce gender power relations; and how feminised sources of power offer new opportunities for peace and prosperity. Addressing these blind spots can help us be more politically savvy. And that's good for development outcomes. If we think politically, we're better at supporting gender equality. A power perspective shows that gender inequalities are tied to power relations at all levels of society. So, gender inequalities are deeply political and if we want to help tackle them we must address them as such. To do this, among other things, we need to develop a deeper understanding of local context; focus on a wider range of powerful actors; and, importantly, take a closer look at the gendered power relations within donor country organisations". http:// www.dlprog.org/opinions/ gender-and-power-six-links-and-one-big-opportunity.php

union. Majority of the unions' Constitution and By-laws do not ensure women participation and rarely participate at collective agreement negotiations, remaining as spectators even if present. No budget is allocated to provide for support services and programs for women members and leaders. Women concerns are also not clearly stated in union objectives.

"Woman representations in political institutions and trade union institutions have been minimal in the 60 years since independence. This is despite Sri Lanka's favorable human development indicators for women, the constitutional guarantee of equality, policy statements making a commitment to equal representation, international commitments under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals under decent work component[8] and sustained activism and advocacy on this issue by civil society organizations as well as the National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights in the last decade. Furthermore, of the small number of women represented in political institutions in Sri Lanka, the great majority of them come from political families and from the Sinhala community"[9].

Political parties representing Indian Origin Tamils have not done as much as they could have to advance women's representation in politics. Their lack of internal democracy, the absence of women in the higher echelons of party decision

8   www.sustainabledevelopment.org
9   The Struggle for Equal Political Representation of Women in Sri Lanka A Stocktaking Report for the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment and the United Nations Development Programme by Chulani Kodikara October 2009

making, the lack of support for women candidates and well-established male dominated networks which exist from the national to local levels are among the major barriers. While most political parties have a women's wing, these wings do not act to increase women's representation. They exist mainly to mobilize the female constituency during election times and support the men in their parties. In between elections, women's wings engage in welfare work, income generation and provision of benefits for women members. For women who are genuinely interested in politics, membership in women's wings does not pave the way to mainstream politics and political leadership (Kodikara 2008, de Silva 1995).

'The story of the persistence of women's subordinate position in trade unions is one that is continuously being told. This is in spite of over 100 years of union attention to the issue, a speeding up of concerns about the gender deficit in the years since the second wave feminism of the 1970s, increased participation of women in the workforce, and 21st century fears for union futures in the face of steady decline in power and membership. It is a story of exclusionary masculinized unionism versus demands for an inclusive gender, and more recently diversity politics. It is a story of one step forward and two back, or sometimes, of two steps forward and one back. The steps forward can be characterized as structural changes in trade unions which both recognize gender deficits and attempt to put in place explicit remedial measures to arrive at some form of gender equality. There has been impressive work on this, but overall the story is so far one largely of failure. Several studies found few women in union leadership positions, at all levels but especially the most

senior ones, with few women involved in collective bargaining and the content of agreements remaining as male-oriented'[10]

Given the short comings and weakness in the present system discussed above, the fundamental question needs to be addressed, *do Hill Country women workers REALLY need trade unions?* In a research study, women workers in the same sectors who were not members of any trade union did not feel that they had been marginalized or excluded from any benefits gained by trade unions on behalf of their members. However, this cannot be considered as conclusive as legislation in Sri Lanka requires an employer to extend equal terms and conditions to all workers, whether they are members of a trade union or not. Therefore, if wage increase and other benefits are negotiated with the employer by a trade union having membership of 40 percent of the workforce, the employer must extend such increase and benefits to the balance 60 percent of the workforce. The benefits of trade union activism are extended well beyond its membership. However, there is ample evidence that membership in unions brings tangible benefits. Working conditions in unionized jobs are of a higher standard because they are negotiated with the employer, and the employer cannot ignore or refuse demands made collectively by a large number of workers. The plantation strike of April 1984 is an example of men women equal wages as a result of direct trade union action. Without the intervention of trade unions, women workers would be worse off than they are. The issue that needs to be determined is: what type of trade unions do women workers need in the present environment[11].

10   Gender politics in trade union: The representation of women between exclusion and inclusion Sue Ledwith, Ruskin College, Oxford

11   Barriers to Women's Participation in Trade Unions by Shyamali Ranaraja,

Given that the rate of unionization is very low in Sri Lanka and labour force participation rate of women is increasing and where the rate of men's participation is decreasing, the promotion of the membership of women is imperative for trade unions from a perspective of long term survival and membership growth. As the population in Sri Lanka is ageing rapidly, it is important to ensure that there is a steady input of young entrants to the labour force, especially female workers with job security and social recognitions, if trade unions are to have a clout in the working lives of men and women. Trade unions have to practice what they preach on gender equality, accountability, transparency and democracy Otherwise they will have no credibility with women. Women wish to join organizations where their concerns are taken seriously and where they have equal opportunities to stand as candidates and to be elected to decision-making positions; to influence the issues being taken up by unions at the workplace and in society; and to become organizers and negotiators by all means (collective bargaining and contractual obligations).

While union-community alliances as a platform, fora and common ground are significant, union capacities to mobilise suggests cultural innovations capable of strengthening women's voices. It reflects new union strategies, transforming male biased practices is crucial for mobilising not only women workers, but also the Hill Country Tamil community as a whole.

Women still have a challenge to make what men make for the same job and attain the promotions that will place them in lead-

ership roles. But, I am convinced that women have made progress and they can make more.

With this in mind, I interviewed Ms. Saraswathy Sivaguru[12], a Hill Country Tamil woman from the present political institution. She is the **only elected woman member in the Central Provincial Council** and an accomplished trade union leader for more than 30 years. Saraswathy provides key perspective on how to build and maintain leadership in a Union as well as Politics and how to overcome challenges and barriers. Interview abstract:

Kalai: Last four years you are a Provincial Council member. How do you feel and how has your journey been so far?

Saras: It is my life time achievement. My journey had ups and downs. I had my family support especially from my husband.

Kalai: What are the biggest challenges and barriers as to why women aren't leading as we need them?

Saraswathy: There are 3 core reasons I've found for why women aren't leading as we need them in trade unions and political institutions, based on my 30 years of work. They are:

1) *The differences between men and women are not fully understood or valued*
2) *Life, family and work priorities clash fiercely*
3) *Extreme work demands can drum women out*

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12   Ms. Saraswathy Sivaguru is member of Provincial Council. In her 30 years Trade union activities, held several leadership positions in Ceylon workers Congress women committees. At present she is head of Women section in National Workers Congress. Interview was conducted in Tamil language.

Many of the challenges and barriers that women face in the workplace are the same as those for men. These challenges include work/ life balance, parenting, juggling many responsibilities and multitasking.

Challenges specific to women discrimination remains present in the workplace; sexual harassment is unfortunately not a thing of the past. None of the trade unions had a gender-balanced executive committee or management team. It is all about separate women's wing with less power and not prioritized women specific issues.

Kalai : How can women overcome these challenges and barriers?

Saraswathy: Whether perceived or real, women leaders sometimes feel pressure to conform to the male leadership model and if she bends to that pressure, she sacrifices one of her own sources of strength and personal power created through social recognition.

The first step toward overcoming any challenge is awareness. Women can overcome this by staying true to and acting from their innate strengths (e.g. creativity and collaboration or leadership skills) in their everyday approach to work and overcoming the inevitable obstacles. Women tend to lead from a more interactive, inspiring a higher degree of commitment to strive to achieve the Trade Union' goals.

Kalai: What are the benefits of having women on the executive committee?

Saraswathy: Primarily, it's the balance that women bring to an executive committee. Simply said, women bring a different perspective based on a different set of work place experiences. This perspective can broaden and deepen the executive committee's insight and **pre-sight** if you will, making it more effective and dynamic thus, more successful rising to the unique challenges their women workers face in their respective workplaces.

But having women on the executive committee isn't just the right thing to do - it's good for the membership.

Kalai: How can women leverage their unique outlook in the workplace?

Saraswathy: Women need to identify their unique talents, understand what they bring to their work environment to best enable success, and then, make sure that their voice is heard. Speak up, speak out, and contribute.

Women may experience difficulty with this in many work environments. So, it's important to find a community within the organization - mentors, role-models, networking groups - who can help navigate through an organization and provide a support system.

Kalai: How can trade unions/ political parties develop women leaders?

Saraswathy: Helping women members to overcome constraints arising out of their inability to participate fully in trade union activities. Implementing structural, organizational and procedural changes within trade unions that are required to

enable women to reach positions as leaders and decision makers.

Some of the best organizations have women's task force groups that they can ask to better understand what women need and value most. If women aren't joining trade union membership, it's important to know why and what can change to better enable them to join for the long-term. Once this has been determined, the next step is to implement awareness programs, policies, and practices and to measure them for effectiveness and promote to leadership.

Kalai: What changes do you forecast for women leaders in the trade union in the next five to ten years?

Saraswathy: We'll see more balance in the numbers of men and women at the leadership table, especially more women at the head of the table. Introduction of quota system, for the coming Local Government Election, many women are initiated to do their ground work, having constant interaction with leadership, learning the procedures, developing campaigning strategies etc.

Kalai: How can we encourage more women to go into the professional carrier for higher pay?

Saraswathy: We need to approach this from two aspects/ views. First, there has been a slew of research that shows the value of exposing girls to professional subjects early on. As a mother of girls, myself, I speak from experience when I say that we need to encourage their curiosity and natural interest with programs and activities which keep the spark alive.

However, we also need to lead by example. We need to celebrate

the women who have been trailblazers in these subjects so that from a young age, women have more role models with whom they can identify. We have more women in South Asia in the political and trade union leadership, CEOs and high professionals including technology sector than we've ever had before. But, we still have work to do at the organizational levels to increase the number of women at trade unions and political institutions. As that number hopefully increases, this too will help as they will, in turn be leaders, role models and mentors to future generations.

New Avenues

On the one hand, it is possible to conclude from the above discussion that male dominated culture of trade unions continues to outweigh the extensive gender and diversity structural work developed in recent decades. The 'paradigm shift' to be achieved by gender mainstreaming has yet to happen.

On the other hand, however, there is plenty of evidence that the gender question and gender politics in unions remain fluid, moving forward and then backward, changing shape as they do so. Study has observed, newer women discourses are mapped onto traditional unionism and social justice narratives in such a way as to enable the expression not only of women's material lives, but also reflexive identity development and gender strategies for change; to 'unsettle and destabilize' the discourses and practices of trade unionism. But true gender equality remains a long way off, and the evidence here points to the continuing need to

address the difficult issue of the pervasiveness of a deep union culture of masculinity.[13]

As an illustration, researcher explored whether senior women were able to have an impact on the masculine and patriarchal culture of the UK professional and technical union MSF (now merged into UNITE). They concluded that, while there is an important dialectical relationship between women's activism and union change or even transformation, this is not straightforward, nor is necessarily always progressive. Thus, gender politics in unions continue to be in a state of flux; from exclusion to inclusion. So far, inclusion too often remains conditional on men in positions of power since even those women who make it to the top as individual leaders find themselves continually challenged as usurpers. These features would appear to hold across cultures and national boundaries, in all types of unions, even though the local details may differ.

But in the 21st century transformation in the economy, through technology and in political structures, is also driving structural change and these new formations of precarious and flexible work which envelop ever more workers, especially the young, and especially women, are having an impact on both work and union structures and cultures.

As researchers conclude in their study of Spanish unions, new membership groups, especially the young and/ or female, and immigrant workers, are faced with the challenge of pushing forward an agenda for change while at the same time avoiding

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13   Sue Ledwith, Gender politics in trade unions. The representation of women between exclusion and inclusion, *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 18, 2, (185), (2012)

becoming trapped in defensive and conservative attitudes when new risks and problems arise. Other imperatives may favour development of different union cultures which can benefit the women's agenda in developing as a vanguard, engaging with equality agendas and equality bargaining.

In addition, it is the new, younger, diverse workforce members, who now have rather different experiences of work, material conditions, and cultural and social backgrounds from previous generations of unionists. Increasingly they are migrants, family centred, and community as well as union activists. Is this the advance guard of a new and more inclusive, equal politics of gender and diversity in trade unions, of alliances and coalitions across grass-roots and community organizing at one level, and cross-nationally at another? These changes are not just about shifting within a narrow band from exclusion to inclusion but have the potential for stepping up the wider transformation and new models of unionism, showing the way to traditional trade unionism in its project of revitalization and change.

We were witness to the rise of women organizers for women concerns, innovative approaches in education and organizing strategies that gave impressive results. The advancement of women leaders who are asserting their place in the union leadership is flourishing.

But we should not stop here. Further development and molding of women agenda is wanting. As we are striving to change the trade union culture, more and more women are needed to share the responsibility in realizing institutional goals - Trade Union/

Political Institutions.

The following[14] are some perspectives to ponder to move on to bring the collective experience into new heights for gender equality.

Breaking the cultural barriers

The struggle for equality is still a struggle against culture. The patriarchal society and consumerism continue to relegate women as displays and second-rate citizens. Education work for both men and women should be continuously placed under evaluation and monitoring. The need to intensify awareness and training for men and women.

Beyond being mere organizational boxes

Institutional support should be scaled-up to support necessary units and initiatives that contribute in giving flesh to the broad concept of social justice, equality and women workers' empowerment. Expansion of budget and integration in union programs are notable steps. Since collective bargaining is the heart of trade unionism, women leaders should now formulate gender-sensitive collective bargaining agreements which they can use in their advocacy work within unions and in their workplaces.

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14   Fedrich Ebert Stftung –Digitale Bibiliothek

Women committees at all levels

The presence of women committees in the various structures of the labor movement is a guarantee that women concerns will be addressed. Likewise, discrimination and inequity in workplaces can only be solved if women activists are present at the shop floor. Since the committees facilitate integration into the organizational life of the union, they in fact, are schools for leadership and democracy. Thus, organizing must transcend labor center or federation structures. Local level organizing is a cornerstone effort to harness women power in the unions.

Deepening the percentage game

A balance in number can be the first step towards a balance in power. Gains were made at various levels but we have to confront this reality: ***membership of women in the trade unions is 51 percent.*** This means more women are entitle to represent at the executive board.

Towards new organizational forms and strategies

As more women continue to join the active workforce, it becomes necessary to "genderize" the trade union movement. It needs a kind of unionism that reaches out to the broadest base of the non-owning, marginalized working class. Here, the use of innovative organizing strategies which will focus on issues of different workers is needed. Need a model that transcends traditional trade union structure and redefines the working people concept. Thus, they are able to integrate a broad range

of women workers from formal sector and informal sector into one organizational expression.

Expanding our themes and concerns

Women concern contains diverse elements that reflect life in totality. Gender equality goes beyond participation. It also covers concern for economic opportunities, health, and politics. Cooperativism is an integral part of the labor movement, thus, women should assume roles in this economically empowering endeavor. Health is a fundamental issue that should be integrated in women programs. Occupational health and safety programs are instruments of protection in work while reproductive rights and protection ensures a better quality of family life.

Reconceptualizing women empowerment

Broadening the perspectives and frameworks are also fundamental in adapting to the changing times. Empowerment means the capability to realize our goals and exercise our rights by our own actions and achievements to complement the perfunctory allocations and quota system.

Final Note: Struggle for gender equality in the workplace and inside the trade unions is still full of obstacles. But to see women recovering their faith in themselves is already a victory for the future. The road ahead will continue to give women the signs and the guides that will help us lay down the foundations of an egalitarian and gender fair labor organization, community and

society. Each woman should then read, interpret and act on it. In the end, only a collective effort can make women succeed in this journey.

"**Above all be heroine of life not the victim".**

"IT IS NOT ALWAYS NECESSARY TO BE STRONG, BUT TO FEEL STRONG"

"Quality of life is not infrastructure; it is a Freedom and Fearless mind"

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Emerging Political Patterns in the Plantation Sector of Sri Lanka: The Need for Democratic Politics

R. Ramesh

Department of Political Science
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

The formation and spread of political parties is a relatively new development in Sri Lanka's plantation community, in which trade unions preceded political parties. The unionisation of plantation workers began in the 1930s. Initially, trade unions formed by persons of Indian origin as well as by left parties were instrumental in mobilising this community politically. The influence of the left-oriented trade unions began to decline in the early 1950s, after which the Ceylon Indian Congress (now the Ceylon Workers Congress) and somewhat later the Democratic Workers Congress (DWC) emerged as the two main trade unions active in mobilizing the plantation people for electoral politics, wage issues and other purposes.

Thus, a unique feature in the political mobilisation of the upcountry plantation population has been the pivotal role played by trade unions. As the plantation community formed a distinct working class, trade unions developed as an integral component of their life. The CWC, DWC and, more recently, the National Union of Workers (NUW) and the Upcountry People's Front (UCPF) have been playing a dual role in the plantation sector, functioning as trade unions as well as quasi-political parties,

representing the plantation community in the legislature and even the cabinet. However, the emergence of political entities as full-fledged political parties began only in the 1980s, with the UCPF, which was formed in 1989, being the first such organisation. The emerging political trends in the plantation sector, especially after 2010, show the increasing importance of party politics than that of traditional union politics.

With the full resolution of citizenship issue in 2003, the traditional political leadership (CWC) and the emerging political leadership (NUW and UCPF) have been moving more towards parliamentary democracy and politics with the view to addressing fundamental issues of the plantation community through policy reforms.

Thus, the restoration of citizenship transformed the trade union politics into party politics. Generally, since the 1990s, there has been a reduction in the number of estate workers and a concurrent reduction in trade union membership, which has considerably affected the strength of trade unions in the plantations. Apart from this, several new unions were formed in the plantations with the aim of assisting electoral ambitions of its leaders, hoping to exploit the expansion of voting rights of the plantation community. Further, a new secondary leadership has emerged in this community, which seems to have more association with state reforms process of the country with the aim of winning political and social rights of this community. This article thus, endeavours to discuss the emerging political patterns, changing political aspirations, the status of the traditional political leadership and the role of upcountry

political parties in the state reforms process in Sri Lanka. It is important to note that the emerging political trends or patterns in this community, especially after the end of protracted civil conflict, have not been documented well. Therefore, this article aims to fulfil this gap by reviewing the existing published and unpublished secondary sources. We collected relevant information from party manifestos, reports, electoral and constitutional reform proposals, civil society submissions for state reform, newspaper interviews and academic articles.

2. Emerging Political Patterns and the Changing Political Aspirations

Historically, the Up-country Tamils have been denied full access to the nation-state and governance structures, starting at the most grassroots levels of government such as Village Council, Grama Niladari, Divisional Secretariat and Pradheshiya Sabha. Since they live under the plantation administration, they have had limited access to social rights and welfare benefits offered by various government institutions, until recent time. This exclusion substantially diminished their subjective human well-being and upward social mobility. Uyangoda (2013) describes that marginalization of the plantations from governmental jurisdiction as 'one of the continuing absurdities inherited from the period of the colonial plantation raj.' Therefore, with the resolution of citizenship issue, institutional discrimination, inequality in governance structures, developmental rights and public service delivery became a matter of serious concern among upcountry political leaders, especially among emerging

new leadership. They identified this absurdity as a serious governance issue and advocating a complete reshaping of the boundaries of governance in the up-country areas to fully reflect the needs of the people, rather than the needs of the plantation industry. It has been demanded that devolution of power, administrative decentralization, inclusive governance and democracy, and power sharing among ethnic groups, as a way to ensure equal voice for all groups living in the up-country. Such a transformation seemed like a remote possibility in the past; nevertheless, the dramatic result of the 2015 Presidential election reinvigorated fresh ideas backed by new collaborations. In other words, since the 1990s, as the Upcountry political parties have been a constituent partner of the successive governments, including the present National Unity Government, they underscore the government to absorb the plantation people in all forms governance structures in full.

Until mid-1980s, plantation trade unions and political parties largely focused on winning citizenship rights and obtaining social, political and economic rights of the plantation people. Nevertheless, after 2003, they shifted their focus towards political bargaining to bring about policy changes to surmount structural, legal and institutional and policy discriminations - integration of this community with Sri Lankan state and fostering better rapport with plantation community and governance structures became an important concern among them. Further, the strategy of coalition politics with the ruling parties was another means of attaining some forms of developmental needs of this community. Especially, prior to making election alliances, they put forth some demands to be attained after the electoral

victory - this had been a peculiar feature of traditional political leadership.

Nevertheless, the emerging new political patterns or in other words, newly developed secondary leadership in the plantation sector have placed their political strategies more on state reforms together with coalition politics. They have been focusing on reforming existing political and governance structures in order to achieve political inclusion and to become complete citizens of this country. Moreover, the new political leadership has been playing a significant role in the state reform process, namely, constitutional and electoral reforms. In this regard, they have submitted their proposals from the viewpoint that their political aspirations have not been included in state reform discourses and debates of Sri Lanka.

Even after resolving the citizenship issue, integration of this community with state apparatus and administrative structures remain incomplete. Though they have gained citizenship rights, it has also left issues regarding political inclusions and governance issues. Put differently, although they have legal form of citizenship, which has not satisfactorily improved their social rights, political demands and economic well-being. Thus, incomplete citizenship raises some key questions on the quality of government in Sri Lanka, inclusive democracy, rule of law, multiculturalism and national integration. This has provided the impetus for the new political patterns to think beyond hitherto dominated wage issues, citizenship, economic rights, and trade unions, and so on, from the perspectives of collective political and social rights of this community. This concern

has considerably increased among new political leadership, youth and educated politicians, civil society organizations and intellectuals.

It seems that they advocate for equality, equity and social justice in all spheres within a reformed and united Sri Lankan state. Thus, the emerging new political patterns are closely connected with ongoing political and governance reforms to achieve the above goals, which is a distinctive feature in the plantation politics and could be clearly observed in the recent past. We could also observe the differences between traditional leadership and new one, that is, the former focused / have been focusing largely on citizenship issues, wage, labour rights, trade union matters, and so forth, but the new trends more concerned on political reforms, institutional reconfiguration, legal reforms, policy changes and right based approach for the development of this community. Despite they have been experiencing political rights over the years, which has not ensured the inclusive citizenship in a manner to enjoy development as rightful citizens. Nevertheless, as put forth by (Uyangoda, 2013), after the citizenship issue, trade unions and political parties of this community have redefined their relationship with state not as outsiders but as marginalized insiders.

In such occasions, according to Uyangoda (2013) and Kymlika (2010), the concept of inclusive citizenship can be used as a political strategy to transcend the limitations or barriers of incomplete citizenship. Since the plantation people are in the margins of the governance structures, state reform ideas and political demands of new political patterns have closely

connected with inclusive citizenship. Importantly, it could be observed that educated youth, civil society activists and intellectuals of this community have been playing a considerable role in changing the political landscape of this community. They continue to pressure the Upcountry political leadership to bring about meaningful changes in government policies and programs for the community to enjoy full potential of legal citizenship rights. They do expect collective actions among Upcountry leaders to address fundamental issues of these people irrespective of union, party, caste and partisan politics. It seems that this trend or awakening has also led to changes in political patterns in the plantation sector. Moreover, when we carefully examine the new political leadership in the plantation sector, it shows the emergence of a sub-elite group in this community. They come from a different social background and their career and activities, and political and union affiliations are located outside the CWC, (except for few leaders). This shows the emergence of an intermediate social and political layer in this community. This could be due to increased educational opportunities, outer exposure, and internal migration, joining in various professions, increased political socialization, and so on and forth. Notably, the emerging political leadership is closely connected with the working-class community or the plantation labour community. This has instigated the new leadership to think and act upon rights-based issues of this community, structural and institutional discriminations.

It is also observable that the emerging new political pattern focuses more on administrative decentralization rather than power-sharing or devolving of political power. Put differently,

they play relatively a low-key role in matters regarding power devolution debates and discourses, but they also demand a political authority and cultural council for the plantation people to safeguard social and cultural rights. This shows that they seem to have a strong feeling that devolution or power sharing is not the immediate need or grievance of the plantation community. Further, the current plantation political leaders continue to play a passive role in national issues of this country such as corruption, power sharing, and political settlement for the ethnic issue, economic policies and issues that affect the country as a whole. The plantation political leaders largely confine themselves to plantation issues with a narrow self-interested agenda. One could possibly argue that the plantation political leaders playing a minimal role on matters related to national issues, which may become an obstacle in winning the political demands of their community. Late Soumiyamoorthy Thondaman who played a remarkable role in both plantation and national politics.

One explanation for the minimal contribution of plantation parties to national issues could be explained that ethnic parties, usually or always, tend to explicitly by the fact work for the interest and welfare of one particular ethnic community or set of communities. Put differently, such parties declare themselves to be defender against exclusion of ethnic minorities and thus employ political representation a central strategy of mobilizing the electoral base. Therefore, such parties generally maintain low profile in national issues like corruption, policy issues, state reform, and so and or forth. Thus, the political parties in the plantation sector also have maintained/maintaining ethno-centric politics in order to protect and promote the

interests and rights of the plantation workers. Similarly, when the national political parties fail to accommodate the aspirations and demands of the minority ethnic groups in their political agenda, it tends to create a political vacuum for ethnic minorities to form political parties. This eventually becomes a platform for voicing ethnic and developmental rights-based issues of marginalized groups, which in turn lead to coalition governments or politics, electoral alliances, and so and forth. This is exactly the case in the plantation sector when we examine the patterns of the political parties.

The failure of post-independence governments to be accommodative to the aspirations and demands of the plantation people in the plural Sri Lankan polity paved the way to the emergence of ethnic-centric parties. When the minority community feels that the government formed by ethnic majority neglects their aspirations and discriminates them, they are pushed to demand their welfare rights and other aspirations in the mainstream national politics by forming political structures. Moreover, since the inception, plantation political parties, as defined by Maurice Duverger (1964), continue to remain as personality party, mainly depend on party leaders, founders or influential personalities. they therefore, hardly pursue political ideologies, policies, party organization, democratic values in party organization and decision-making. Owing to above factors, plantation political parties are less likely to actively engage in national political and policy issues of the country. Moreover, the lack of ideological orientation, wider understanding of national issues, political trends, and limited national contacts

considerably limit the potential for plantation leaders (except a few) to become successful national political leaders.

3. Changing Political Patterns and Aspirations

It is also worth noting that since the late 1970, the CWC continued to pursue coalition politics with the UNP and was able to gain some benefits to this community but with certain limitations. In other words, joining ruling parties had been an "unwritten policy of the CWC". On some occasions, with some demands, and often without demands it continues so to date and its only justification for such action is that serving this community is possible only through joining the ruling party. This is a kind of "taken for granted" approach or in other words, a lame excuse invented to cover its selfishness.

However, the emergence of the Upcountry Peoples Front in the late 1980s significantly changed the political landscape of this community. Until then the CWC played the central role in providing both trade union and political leadership. Thus, the UCPF moved beyond the 'minimalist political citizenship' with a view to gaining full political rights in line with social citizenship rights. They developed their political strategies of creating more spaces for political representation and participation and expanding local space for political representation in local governance. Thus, the emergence of intermediate political class in this society first came into force with the formation of UCPF and it has still been successful in advocating political and social rights. Now the NUW has emerged as another intermediate political class of this community with a leader emerging from

the working-class family. This indicates the transformation of political leadership in this community. This pattern evolved from middle-class families, but they are not workers, although their parents might have worked on the estates. Trade union activities and positions are also held by educated youth coming from middle-class families with trilingual competency. Similarly, a significant number of graduates also have emerged from this society despite many structural and institutional barriers which continue to harm this community. They are sensitive to political and social problems confronting their community. They appear to be very vigilant about political moves and they do observe their leaders through social and other forms of media. They are in a position to pressure and demand their leaders on various issues that affect this community.

Importantly, broadbasing the governance and political structures at the regional and local level seems to be an important concern among educated youth along with employment, housing, land and other policy issues. The recent political trends in this community also indicate the steady downfall of electoral and trade union base of the traditional political leadership (the CWC). This change could be explained as the result of an emerging middle-class in this community. It is widely argued that in a minority community, in the absence of a large middle-class to offer political and social leadership, the traditional leaders become predominant in shaping the fate of such politically and socially disadvantaged groups.

When we discuss about changing political patterns in the plantation politics, it is also important to place on record the

formation of Tamil Progressive Alliance (TPA) in 2015, which was then considered as an interim electoral alliance, but which has now become a powerful political alliance representing this community more than ever before. This was the first alliance ever to come out for a general election from the plantation community. This consists of three leading plantation trade unions or parties such as Upcountry People's Front, National Union of Workers (NUW) and Democratic People's Front. This alliance comprises of some former CWC political representatives, political activists and supporters as well. The alliance contested in the Parliamentary election of 2015 on the UNP ticket in seven districts, secured three seats in Nuwara Eliya, one in Kandy, one in Badulla and one in Colombo. This reflects the changing political order in the plantation community. In the meantime, the CWC went on the SLFP led UPFA ticket and got only two seats. This was the first time that the CWC failed to secure a national list MP as it had since 1989. The message is clear that the CWC is losing its ground being replaced with the NUW as its leader intends to make a radical change in traditional party politics in the plantation community. The leaders of this alliance (TPA) claim that they move towards creating a better future for the plantation people in this country with equal rights, especially land and housing rights. In fact, the last two elections - presidential and general elections of 2015 reveal that the plantation people do not like to be under the control of one single and traditional political party. In the meantime, they also prefer having and participating in a multi-party democratic system. More importantly, recent electoral behavior of the plantation people shows that they also would like to fall in line

with political changes that occur at the national level. Therefore, they tend to cast their votes in accordance with the national trends. Further, they think that they must be a partner in the national development process.

Though there are positive changes in the plantation politics, some evidence shows that plantation people are far from satisfaction about their life. For instance, the survey data on the State of Democracy in South Asia indicates that only 38.2% of the plantation Tamils are satisfied with the performance of democracy in Sri Lanka, which is the lowest of all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (Uyangoda, 2013). One explanation for this pattern might be that the successive governments of this country have not treated this community as equal and full citizens owing to different reasons. Nevertheless, interestingly, this survey indicates that about 90% claim to have voted at every election. Union politics and active political mobilization by unions could be a major factor for this pattern. Moreover, in their view, provision of basic needs and public services is the most important feature of democracy. One explanation for this could be that they have been excluded from all forms of governance structures of this country since the independence; therefore, they encounter poverty, ill health, poor social development and low subjective human well-being. Thus, they have constructed a mindset that the key elements of a democracy should be delivering public services for every citizen in an equal manner without any discriminations.

4. State Reform Debates and the Plantation Community

Uyangoda (2013) argues that plantation people demand state and governance reforms from the perspective of an ethnic minority who have suffered, and continue to suffer discrimination and social and political exclusion. Further, the emerging new political leadership also shows their interest in reforming some of the existing laws, which hinder the plantation people to gain access to legally mandated public services from the local government authorities in general and Pradheshiya Sabha, in particular. It has been found that there are some provisions in the Pradheshiya Sabha Act which prevent plantation people from accessing public services (ISD, 2011; Vijesandiran and Ramesh, 2013). Owing to long-standing advocacy and lobbying of civil society and political demands of the new leadership, the Act now has been amended with a view to enabling the plantation people to participate in local governance, not merely as voters but also as rightful citizens of this country.

With regard to electoral reforms, there is a democratic concern among the emerging political leadership as their political representation at all levels of political bodies continues to remain inadequate. Since they are dispersed in several constituencies, they encounter difficulties in securing representation. Therefore, they have submitted proposals to the government that the new electoral system should secure adequate representation for plantation people by all possible means, for which they suggest some form of reservations, quota, reducing the threshold for winning seats, and so forth. They demand for special measures and safeguards in the proposed electoral system for dispersed

minorities, plantation people in this case. Notably, in this regard, the government could think of an idea of differentiated citizenship policies, which refers to recognition of specific rights claims of ethnic and other kinds of minorities. This notion helps expand the framework of liberal citizenship to adequately respond to the diversity and inequality embedded in the socio-economic, political and administrative structures of a country.

According to the leading Canadian scholar in the field of multicultural citizenship, Will Kymlika (1995, 2010) the idea of liberal citizenship denotes that laws and policies regarding citizenship in many modern nations, treats all citizens equally based on their legal status and membership in the state irrespective of ethnicity, race, gender, caste, religions and other differences. The emerging new political leadership could focus more on differentiated citizenship rights claim to winning social rights. In the case of plantation people, it could be argued that the successive governments of this country have been practising undifferentiated citizenship policies, which would neither address inequalities and all forms of discrimination, nor would allow in bringing about new policies and programs to address the marginalization of minorities. Therefore, the new political leadership could propagate and advocate the idea of differentiated citizenship to ensure political, economic and social rights of this community.

Above all, the recent political patterns show that plantation people dislike to be passive voters but active and rightful citizens of the country. This has instigated the new political leadership to pursue right-based approach in political bargaining for policy

and state reform. However, as argued by Uyangoda (2013), the claim for social rights of this community emerged in a complex situation as Sri Lankan state is no longer a welfare state. It has entered in to a post-welfare phase in its social policy with the introduction of open economic policies (Jayasuriya, 2010). The plantation people received their legal form of citizenship at a time when fully fledged welfare policies and programs started withering away and neo liberal economic and social policies came into force with the support of the World Bank and other financial institutions. This has become a formidable challenge for plantation parties to claim social rights of this community with a considerably poor subjective human well-being. It seems that this challenge has not been properly addressed by their leaders, rather they depend on coalition regime, donor agencies and NGOs to fulfill welfare and developmental needs. However this can be addressed through power-sharing and now their in place a political climate to demand political and administrative decentralization at the local level. It is also important to demand administrative decentralization along with increased public service delivery, autonomy and self-governance, which can possibly improve social rights and human well-being of this community. Plantation people now hold a legitimate avenue to claim social and political rights, which could be used to challenge and break social marginality and its production. But which requires concrete strategies. We are yet to see such strategies among the plantation political leaders.

It is not easy winning social and political rights in the Sri Lankan polity considering prevailing ethno and religious nationalism. Therefore, ethnicity and identity politics need to

be accommodated as a positive force in nation building projects, especially in the post-war context. Ethnic politics and minority demands need to be democratized without harming ethnic majority, national interest and other minorities, because, there is also a chance to question the legitimacy of this community to claim rights since its presence in Sri Lanka is relatively short. Therefore, when our leaders make claims in the state reform process, they need to hold two pre-conditions in mind. Firstly, our claims should not threaten the unity and sovereignty of this country, and secondly, they should explicitly declare that they do not have any form of hidden agenda for separatism and therefore, they present the proposals from the view point that we are legitimate stakeholders of the country to claim rights as equal citizens with no agenda for separatism. Their main concern should be finding out strategies to address the marginalization practiced in governance and other spheres.

The current political trends in this community show that there has been an intense debate on state reform proposals. It undoubtedly contributes to the larger debate of deepening democracy in Sri Lanka. When we look at previous state reform proposals, we find they have had mainly focused on formulating proposals, but the newly emerged political leadership takes much care on both formulation and presentation of such proposals in a manner as to accept them as legitimate and non-threatening. It also should be held in mind that acceptance of state reform proposals of minorities depends on willingness of reformists, dialogue, consensus politics, claiming ownership and bargaining. As far as the Sri Lanka's politics is concerned, proposals that fundamentally benefit a particular ethnic minority are less likely

to be accepted or accommodated, it might create resistance from the majority, and sometimes from other minorities as well. However, state reform proposals should provide new avenues to redefine the relationship of this community with state, and vice versa. Above all, in the state reform process, the Sri Lankan state should put forth a social democratic agenda with a view to improving social and human well-being of this community. They would not benefit from state reforms and power sharing as they are still left behind in social and human development.

5. Ethno-nationalism and the Plantation Tamils

There has been another emerging pattern in this community, which gives ascendancy to its increasing ethno-nationalism. In the case of Sri Lanka, in general, ethnicity has been the most important factor in determining people's electoral choices. With identity politics and ethnicity in particular seen as being on the rise, ethnicity can be listed as the most important variable in Sri Lankan politics together with religion. Indeed, it could be argued that elections in Sri Lanka are nothing more than ethnicity and religion, in which voters more often give priority to ethnic lines than to policy preferences; hence, ethnic appeals can be useful to politicians because constituencies are usually dominated by one or another ethnic group. Interestingly, this trend has increasingly been getting importance among the plantation people in the recent past and this becomes evident when we analyse the electoral performance and voting patterns of the plantation people in the recent provincial council (PC) and parliamentary elections. For instance, in the Central Provincial

Council Election of 2013, thirteen Tamil representatives returned to the PC, of whom were ten from Nuwara Eliya District, two from Kandy and one was from Matale. In this election, the United People's Freedom Alliance's (UPFA) vote share increased, quite remarkably, from 50% at the local government elections in 2011, to 59% in the provincial election two years later. This is because of the electoral alliance of the CWC with UPFA. At the same time, the United National Party's vote share decreased by 5%. The plantation people have some form of pro UNP propensity which is basically determined by the trade unions. In the 2014 Uva Provincial Council election, four Tamil representatives returned to the council. A remarkable trend in this move towards ethnonationalism was the victory of two candidates in the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council election after several years.

Similarly, when we look at the Parliamentary elections of 2004, 2010 and 2015, it clearly indicates the emerging trend of ethnonationalism among the plantation Tamils, which is a new development in this society, compared to their past political behaviour and voting patterns. This has emerged after 2010 with the suppression of minority rights by the then Rajapakse government. It is also evident that plantation political parties are more likely to build their support structure based on their ethnicity, caste, union affiliations, and so forth. All in all, the minority mind-set plays a relatively major role in their mental make-up. Though ethnic feeling remains successful in mobilizing voters than that of union feeling, it is more likely to have a negative impact in cultivating national feeling on a number of affairs. In addition, ethnic politics prevent plantation people

from looking at party ideology and policy differences during the elections.

The 'proportional representation' also helped the Upcountry political parties to secure representation in all political bodies to a certain extent. Nevertheless, at the beginning it negatively affected the plantation Tamils, as they were not conversant with the new system of voting which eventually increased the rejected votes. However, with the significant increase of the plantation workers enjoying the franchise rights, they have been better represented in Parliament and other political bodies and the problems of the plantation community has gained attention at the representative bodies.

Nonetheless, in patronage, democracies like Sri Lanka, ethnic parties, unusually or always, depend on ethnicity mind-set to mobilize voters, because voters and leaders, elites in patronage democracies are motivated by desire for material and financial benefits. This theory could be applied to Muslim and plantation political parties, except to TNA being an exception. Kanchan Chandra (2004) in her *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, explains that ties to/with a political leader or political patron increases voters' chance of obtaining valued state resources, services and several material and psychic goods and benefits, therefore, ethnic parties are most likely to succeed. In the case of Sri Lanka, elites continue to dominate the patronage democracy, including the plantation politics. However, the emergence of new parties and increase of political representation in various political bodies have made some visible changes in social welfare, politics and infrastructure development in this community.

Moreover, there has been a change in the voting pattern owing to increasing educational attainments, outer exposure, changes in the traditional political leadership, the emergence of working-class political leadership, and so on. Moreover, collective agreements, weakening of workers strength and TU power all have changed traditional political patterns and union politics in this community. It should also be held in mind that the voting patterns of the plantation people have long been shaped by a sense of feudalistic obligation that workers have to adhere to the pleas of union leaders and the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) which is the oldest and largest in membership. Nevertheless, this has changed with the political changes and upward mobility in this community. Further, there is an expectation amongst estate workers, based on government promises, that their conditions will undergo a significant structural improvement, especially with regard to housing, land rights, education and infrastructure development. However, it also should be understood that the developmental promises of the Sri Lankan government are often framed in patronage terms and are presented as barter for political and electoral support. That is, clientelism is openly asserted. Whilst the Northern Tamil voters might respond to such a prospective barter with anger and rejection, the estate voters may be more submissive and more open to clientelism, as is the case with the Southern polity. Since the plantation people are left behind in the sphere of social and human development or basic needs they prone to clientelism. Unions and political parties, both national and Upcountry, continue to use this strategy of clientelism to capture and maintain their electoral support. It is also observed that

the ethnic voting or ethnonationalism has become a political problem in the plantations as it leads to clientelistic and patronage politics. This also results in various developmental projects and programs in the estates and remains an obstacle for the community to equally access public services and other welfare benefits. Clientelism has also created union and party splits, retaliations and nepotism in developmental programs.

6. Conclusion

All in all, the discussion above shows the changing political patterns in the plantation sector and factors influencing such changes, the status of traditional political leadership and changing political aspirations of the plantation people. The analysis above indicates that the plantation people seem to have a strong feeling that they are not just passive voters in this country, but also active and rightful citizens. Therefore, they prefer to see a pragmatic change in the plantation politics by changing the landscape of traditional politics with a view to bringing about reforms in governance to ensure their rights and entitlements. This change has mainly been resulted from structural changes in this community, educational attainment, occupational patterns, and internal migration towards urban areas, ethno nationalism and outer exposure. This has led to the emergence of a secondary political leadership with different set of ideas and proposals for the development of this community from the point of equal rights, reforms and land and housing ownership. However, it does not mean that the new leadership fully differs from the traditional plantation politics, though they have embarked upon

some positive changes. They do carry out development works in line with trade union and party affiliations. Further, retaliation based on party and union affinities continue to remain the same, though the new leadership envisages a positive change in this community. This depicts a democratic deficit among the plantation political parties.

This urges the political leadership in this community to work collectively based on some common principles regardless of all differences in order to bring about substantial changes in government policies and programs to ensure a better and decent life for the plantation people. The article also suggests that the Upcountry political parties cannot be evaluated by traditional political party theories and approaches, because they are based on trade union movement and pragmatism with ethnic sentiments. This nature obviously questions the status of Upcountry political movements/ parties as political party; however, this very nature develops through distinct history of this community has given room for new party theories and approach for minority politics in multi-cultural society. Moreover, being a minority ethnic community, the Upcountry political parties also adopt ethnic specific politics, promoting Indian sentiment, coalition politics and networking with international agencies for securing political interests. These strategies are commonly employed by minority parties that emerge from suppressed ethnic groups and becoming a common phenomenon in highly polarized countries where inclusive democracy, good governance, equality and equity are largely questioned. It is also evident that some internal dimensions of upcountry political parties including caste, family politics, leader-centered politics and personality

conflicts have increased the party splits and changes over the years.

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