MINORITY POLITICS IN SRI LANKA

O. PEACOCK

The Patterns of interaction between the majority community and the minority community is very crucial to the process of national integration. More often than not the ruling elite of a country, mostly representing the majority community would subscribe to policies requiring minority communities to emulate values, norms and ways of living of the majority community. Often, minorities reject such efforts either by openly resisting attempts at assimilation and at other times may be prepared for withdrawal or compromise. It is interesting to enquire into this pattern of interaction between the majority and the minority community, the factors shaping it and the emerging relationship and response.

Most of the South Asian countries present a cultural moasic. There are a number of minorities with different Socio-Cultural norms and practices and different degrees of sensitivities in regard to protection of their own identity. Generally, the academic attention is commanded either by the large size or more vociferous and challange some minorities. The tiny and constitutionalist minorities are generally ignored though their culture and material and other attainments may hold out their potential significance and so many call for comprehensive studies.

The Burghers in Sri Lanka are such a community whose profile and response to the integrative processes as worked out by the majority community is detailed in the study presented here. Barely constituting of half a percent of the total population, the community has enjoyed high status in English education and administrative hierarchy during the British Rule and prided on European parentage like the Anglo-Indians in India. But the things changed with independence as the new rulers hailing from majority sinhalese community went on

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MINORITY POLITICS IN SRI LANKA
(A Study of the Burghers)

Olive Peacock

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Contents

Foreword

It is rarely that one comes across studies on minuscule minorities except by anthropologists. Political scientists tend to devote their attention more towards those communities which are powerful and matter in the power structure. Dr. Olive Peacock has undertaken the study of the Burghers of Sri Lanka, a community which once played an important role but is gradually dwindling in its number. While most of them are migrating to other countries those continuing to stay in the country, aspire to join the mainstream of Sri Lankan nationalism. Dr. Olive Peacock's study is, therefore, timely, and it is hoped that it will be useful to the scholars of Sri Lankan politics.

RAMAKANT

JAIPUR

Preface

The study of minorities has acquired much importance particularly after independence of the third world countries notwithstanding its exploitative nature the imperial power was considered an arbiter in matters concerning intercommunity relations. Moreover, then the minorities were privileged enough to have a seperate electorate, reservations of jobs etc., and other safeguards as to protect their interests. But with the handing over of power the fate of the minorities was now in the hands of the indigenous rulers, mostly drawn from the majority community. Obviously, the ruling elite may evince greater loyalty to and bestow greater loyalty to and bestow greater favours on the members of the majority community or the minorities may atleast harbour such a suspicion. Besides this, there is another source of tension between the majority and minority communities. It lies in the attempts, if any, of the majority community to assimilate or dominate the minorities by imposing its own culture including language and other contentious symbols.

Thus, the patterns of interaction between the majority community and the minority community is very crucial to the process of national integration. Sometimes, minorities may resist attempts at assimilation and at other times may be prepared for withdrawal or compromise. The latter is only possible if they are assured that they will be allowed to follow their religion, culture and speak their language. This could best be done with the cooperation of both the majority and the minorities.

II

It is well known that most of the South Asian countries present a cultural mosaic. In such a system, certain minorities happen to be more sensitive to the issues concerning identity and play a more crucial role in politics, such as the Muslims in India, and recently the Sikhs, than others, as the Parsees and the Jains, whose members play a role more in their individual capacities.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the Tamils are equally sensitive and active on the political front. The minorities by virtue of their strength can fight out for their rights and to some extent get it. The problem arises in a different form about minorities with a tiny numerical strength, just a per cent or even less. What happens to them in face of encroachments on their identity? How is their demand for social justice and assured identity met out or responded to by the ruling elite? What strategies are considered effective for the minorities lacking in politico-numerical strength? Such questions are quite relevant particularly because the microscopic minorities do not come to the forefront on the political arena. They do not have the numerical strength to effectively voice their opinions and grievances. Sometimes, they may not also have the economic resources to influence the corridors of power, as the jews in the U.S.A. do. Finally, one finds that most of the research studies have been done on larger minorities; say for example, the Muslims in Sri Lanka or the Tamils. The smaller minorities are not a preferred subject of study because they do not tend to be so problematic. But then this is not a correct approach. Social researchers are more than a fire-fighters' group. They have to devote not only to problematic but other minorities as well. All the more important, for it raises one's curiosity as to why these minorities have been overlooked or by-passed.

III

One such minority is the Burghers of Sri Lanka. They represent the smallest minority in the Island. They played a very important role in pre-independence era. But with the declaration of independence to the Island of Sri Lanka most of them migrated to European countries. Those who were left behind had just one alternative of joining the mainstream. Though they have been accepted as citizens, they still feel alienated and refrain from playing a vital role either politically or socially. The study of this community, as originally planned, relied both on the spot observations (non participate observations that way) and a schedule to be personally administered among the Burghers of Sri Lanka. With the declaration of emergency, however, in 1983 it was not possible to undertake a field trip to the island. One had to place complete reliance on secondary sources available in India, mostly in Jaipur and Delhi. The researcher also had the advantage of information supplied by some colleagues who happened to have visited the island just a few months before the emergency.

IV

I owe a great deal to Professor Ramakant, the Director of South Asia Studies Centre who always encouraged me in my work. I have had the benefit of his guidance and valuable comments right from the beginning, viz, the selection of the topic of research. I am all grateful to him. I am also grateful to Dr. M.L. Sharma, Associate Professor, South Asia Studies Centre who took personal interest at various stages of my work and gave valuable suggestions which proved of immense help. I will also like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. L.M. Jacob who also gave her suggestions whenever I approached her. My hearty thanks are due also to Mrs. S.R. Dubey, Assistant Professor in South Asia Studies Centre with whom I could have several fruitful discussions on the topic and to Miss Sudha Trikha, the Documentation Officer in South Asia Studies Centre for helping me in preparing the bibliography and locating the relevant literature; and finally to all my other colleagues in the Centre who offered their comments and suggestions from time to time.

I express my thanks to Dr. S.P. Agarwal, Director of Documentation Centre, I.C.S.S.R., to the Library Staff of University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, of Sapru House Library, Delhi and National Archives, Delhi.

I owe, indeed, a great deal to my mother who has been an inexhaustible source of inspiration and strength to me.

Lastly, while the scholar has had the benefit of valuable guidance and comments from a number of her teachers and colleagues, the opinion expressed on the subsequent pages are of her own.

Now much less South Asia Studies Centre, is responsible for the views expressed here. The researcher is also conscious of several short-comings and limitations particularly in view of the fact that a field trip to Sri Lanka could not be possible because of factors mentioned above.

OLIVE PEACOCK

1
Nature of Enquiry

The problem of minorities is very acutely felt and has been causing widespread anxieties all over the world. Not only developing countries, but even the developed ones which long ago accomplished their bourgeois democratic revolution and resolved these questions, are today faced with similar problems. Cases of rebellion by Basque people in France and Spain and by the Irish, the Scottish and the Welsh people in the United Kingdom very much fit in the general pattern.

The ruling elite of newly independent countries do not merely have the privilege of contributing their bit to the nation-building process but in the process have also to face stupendous challenges. They have to cope with the challenge of a time—bound economic development. More importantly—though it is not independent of the challenge of economic development—they have to address themselves to the arduous task of forging a national identity for their country by evolving a national polity, the loyalty structure which may cut across and even assimilate or weave together various traditionally prevalent communal and primordial bonds. The task does not imply elimination of communal and primordial loyalties, but their subordination to the overeaching demands of nationalism which basically signifies a will to live together.

The will to live or cohere together has been most difficult to be achieved particularly in developing countries. The process of modernization in these countries, which in theory implies rationality, integration, political articulation and tolerance of dissidence, tends to heighten particularistic sentiments and thereby endangers consensus-formation in relation to national goals and values.[1]

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1. William J. Friedland, "A Sociological approach to *Modernization" in Modernization by Design : Social change in twentieth century* (Calcutta : Scientific Book Agency, 1972) for an analysis of various facets of the problems.

The problem of national integration becomes all the more difficult in South Asian region, especially Sri Lanka and India, which have a number of culturally heterogeneous communities. Sri Lanka is well known for its geographical, economic, social and religious diversities. The island presents a variegated scenario under the tremendous pressure of social change often unleashed by conscious adoption of western politico-economic institutions,[2] technology and rational value system. As a result of that, various social groups are getting internally differentiated and exposed to internal contradictions. An individual takes time to adopt his pre-disposition and attitudes to the changed context suitably. Acquisition of skills to enable one to manipulate and work with new institutions is also not automatic. Meanwhile the bases of conventional roles and institutions undergo a process of erosion that makes a man feel rootless. The feeling of rootlessness, or what may be called loss of identity, is at the heart of the problem of national integration. Lucian Pye[3] in his Study of Burma derivatively holds that the more effectively the crisis of individual identity is solved, the better he will be placed to deal with new bureaucratized organizations which are essential to the nation-building process. Thus, he holds that "quest for nationhood, the awe of politics, and the widespread ambivalence of personal identity are clearly related phenomena.[4]

The problem of national integration has two levels of manifestation—vertical and horizontal. Vertically speaking, it is not concerned with bridging the gap between the elite and the masses. It is a problem of diffusion of values that the modernizing elite have adopted from the West. Even at the risk of digression, it may be pointed out here that the elite could be divided into two groups—the progressive and the communal. The former tends to have a broad, usually secular, outlook while the latter is confined to narrow grooves. The former is keen on joining the national mainstream and believes in enrichment of cultures through their inter-mingling, the latter prefers to remain confined to its preserves as it fears that in the process of intermingling of cultures, its own culture would get swamped. The latter tendency is discernible in the case of Sri Lanka, especially among the minority communities. The fear of getting swamped is related to the gaps in levels of modernization of sub-cultures. Some cultural groups may have been exposed earlier to the processes of modernization as compared to the others. This may encourage among the

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2. This is what John W. Lewis calls an "Inverse Model" of modernization. For various characteristic features and limits of the model, see his article : The Social limits of Politically Induced Change" in n-1, pp. 1-33.
3. Lucian W. Pye : *Politics, personality and Nation Building—Burma's search for identity* (New Haven, Yale, 1967). p.1,
4. Ibid.—p. 2.

3

more developed sub-cultures a tendency to dominate others. Thus, backward and insulated sub-cultures in a traditional society may develop antagonism when exposed to each other in the wake of modernization. By and large, therefore, building bridges between two and more communities, is the problem of national integration at the horizontal level. The problem at the two levels cannot, however, be separated altogether. David Apter makes an insightful observation in this regard when he argues that those political systems tend to become more turbulent where the ruling elite is bent upon changing simultaneously the instrumental as well as consumatory values.[5] Binder holds a similar opinion.[6] But it is not always the ruling elite on whom the entire responsibility for systemic crisis could be pinned. As it is evident from Pye's study, the modernizing elite may falter owing to the inability of the people to respond to and absorb the changes.[7]

It will not be out of place to mention here that of the two dimensions—vertical and horizontal—it is the former which holds a greater threat to the processes of national integration than the latter. This is so beacause the problem at the vertical level—a consequence of accentuation of elite-mass gap tend to produce systematic instability and, thus, threaten the frame-work within the confines of which the pursuit of the goal of national integration takes place. This happens because accentuation in elite-mass gap would tend to erode people's faith in the system's capabilities to establish a just and egalitarian social order. This is not to deny the possibility that problems at the horizontal level may also result in balkanization of the country. The classic examples of this type are the partition of India in 1947 and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The same accounts for a strong secessionist movement demanding a separate Tamil State in North Sri Lanka.

Behind these two dimensions of the problems of national integration—horizontal and vertical—it is not always the ethnographical, lingual, religious or elite-mass differences that act as accentuating factors. Actually, as Karl Deutsch brings out, 'Nationalism' is more than an expression of these factors, singly or collectively, it is a psychological response related to

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5. For details, see David Apter, *Some Conceptual Approaches to the Study of Modernization* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1969).

6. CF '...The nature of Government and policy of the new States and the level of modernity which they are able to achieve in society, polity, economy and elitemass gap is closed..." Leonard Binder, "National Integration and Political Development" *American Political Science Review (henceforth cited as APSR)* Vol. VIII, 3, Sep. 1964, pp. 630.

7. n. 3 particularly, pp. 265-30.

the "we" feeling that binds a nation together.[8] This "we" feeling is a consequence of constant maintenance of channels of meaningful communication among various sub-groups and uninterrupted diffusion of values and symbols underlying national unity. It is in this respect that the role of the ruling elite as a modernizing agent in post-independent period in a developing country acquires significance. The goals and values, the strategy and the style that the ruling elite adopts, have an important bearing on the processes of nation-building in general and national integration in particular. Here, again a distinction could be made between the sectarian and the secular stance of the ruling elite in the pre-independence era when the plank of communalism was part and parcel of the policies of the national movement.

II

While it is difficult to say precisely since when the concept of minority has become manifest, the existence of minorities and a need to take steps for their protection came to be recognised following World War I, when, by readjustment of boundaries and transfer of population, countries and kingdoms were attempted to be created all over Europe so as to constitute homogeneous communities of people belonging to a winning ethnic background. Such an exercise was, however, soon found to be futile. The Monolithic societies, thus, sought to be created, still contained one or the other kind of minorities, who could not be completely eliminated from society. The migration of Jews as a result of persecution at the hands of Hitler, the expansion of communism in the aftermath of the Second World War, found the world dotted with countries which were no longer monoethnic societies and which were teeming with problems arising out of the presence of minorities either indigenous or immigrant.

The United Nations Organization like its predecessor, the League of Nations, became obsessed with the problems of minorities. The problem of minorities began with the definition of the term 'minorities' itself. No specific definition has been found for the term 'minorities' which would encompass all the imaginable variables, ranging from the numerical strength of a group in society to the extent of political authority enjoyed by a group in a given society.[9] The Report of the U.N. Commission for prevention of discrimination

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8. Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1963).
9. For a detailed discussion of the minority concept, see Rose H. Arnold, 'minorities' in *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. New York Macmillan and Company, 1972 pp. 365-368.

and protection of minorities defines the concept of minority as including only "those non-dominant groups in a population, which possess and wish to preserve a stable ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest of the population". This definition obviously excluded the dominant whites of South Africa, the Slovaks of Yugoslavia, the Sunni Muslims of Iraq and urdu-speaking elite of Pakistan, before 1971. On the other hand, this definition applies to and cover the Burgher population of Sri Lanka.

MAJORITY-MINORITY RELATIONS

While the minorities, by whatever definition they be recognized, count as an important factor in the integrative development of nation-building, it is the general desire of the various sections of the population of multiethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious societies, to maintain their own individuality that comes in the way of development of a national character. What prevents the people or holds them back in submitting themselves "in favour of a general commitment to an over-arching and somewhat alien civil order" is the fear that it would result in losing their own identity, to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person, either through absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass or, what is even worse, through domination by some other ethnic, racial or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order, with the temper of its own personality".[10] Such domination is normally exhibited in a given society by the majority group and this phenomenon brings into question the majority-minority relations particularly in a democratic society.[11]

INTEGRATION

When people of dis-similar traits come to live together, several sub-processes are set in motion, before any discernible integration or assimilation takes place. The first of these sub-processes is acculturation, which starts with the learning of each other's language and leads to the exchange of customs,

10. Clifford, Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution' in Clifford Geertz (ed) *Old Societies, New States* (New Delhi, Amerind, 1971) pp. 108-109.

11. Humayun Kabir does not seem to be correct when he claims that "there can be no question of minorities except in a democracy and unless there is a democracy the problem would not arise in that Form at all." It is, however, true that a democratic system offers most favourable conditions of expression of poiltical identities, sub-nationalism and group loyalties. Humayun Kabir, *Minorities in a Demrcacy*, (Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhya Art, 1968) p. 2.

etiquette, manners and the kind, which provides the means for the various groups to understand, appreciate and adopt the cultural traits of one another. In most societies, however, the integrative process meets a stumbling block at the stage of civic assimilation. The case of the Burghers is quite illustrative in this regard. The sense of superiority prevails so strongly among them that the community is often accused of not showing any great inclinination to social change. This only harbours a psychology of alienation in face of losses of politico-economic privileges. One may well examine here if the mental reservations further induce them to leave the country rather than adjust to the new patterns of emerging culture.

III

It will not be out of place to recall here that the problem of the minorities came to the forefront after World War I when a number of new States were carved out of the Central European Empires and the majority communities, found themselves turned over-night into minorities in the new States. The Germans were reduced to a minority in Poland and the Austrians in Czechoslovakia. Lest the peace of the world should be disturbed on account of illtreatment of minorities, treaties, called the project Guarantee Treaties, have been entered into to instill a sense of loyalty among the new states under which they were placed and to enjoin upon the new governments to own the citizens of their erstwhile enemy countries as their new nationals and citizens. At the end of World War II, it was commonly believed, especially in Europe, that the problem of the protection of minorities had lost its importance. The individuals or groups concerned had either been aberrated or exchanged. However, the problems of minorities with all its gravity has shifted to Africa and Asia, where many new minorities have come into existence.

It was, therefore, not surprising when in June 1946 the Economic and Social Council empowered the Commission on Human Rights to establish a sub-Commission to advise it on the protection of minorities and the prevention of discrimination. It was to see that no discrimination was made in respect of the minorities in matters of race, sex, language or religion. The term 'minority' has been defined by the sub Commission so as to include only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserve stable, ethnic, religious, or linguistic traditions or characteristics of their own, which are markedly different from those of the rest of the population. Such minorities should properly include a number of persons sufficient by themselves to develop such characteristics; and the members of such minorities must be loyal to the State of which they are nationals.

What is, however, equally important, if not more, is to identify how minorities themselves look at the problem of national integration in their own context. There are very few studies of this variety available so far. A modest attempt has been made through this study to fill the gap in the specific context of the Burghers of Sri Lanka, one of the several minorities that constitute Sri Lanka's variegated cultural scenario.

The Burghers are a microscopic minority in the plural society of Sri Lanka, who are now almost a diminishing community. A large number of them have already left for European countries and for Australia after the declaration of independence in 1948. The population strength of the community has come down from 0.5% in 1956 to 0.4% in 1971.

This begets a question as to the rationale of studying a dwindling minority. The fact, however, is that the very trend should necessitate a study of this type. One must collect the evidence before it is lost in the layers of history as the community loses its identity. Moreover, the fact is that the Burghers who are of European origin, played a vital role during the Portugese, Dutch and British period. They were the ones who manned most offices right from the top cadre to the lower most post. The Burghers irrespective of their strength were an articulate community, they were quick to learn the mannerism and style of functioning of the Western rulers. They had also learned the language and fitted in very well in the heyday of European rulers. The European masters on the other hand were happy to have them because they not only worked on a comparatively less salary but were even loyal to their masters and undertook their tasks seriously, and sincerely which they did not expect out of the other communities.

Therefore in order to go into a depth analysis of this community the objective of the study would be to have a brief historical background of the community; how they were placed in the pre and post Independent Sri Lanka, what has been their attribute towards the imperial masters, how they have been treated by them, and the like. After the imperial powers left what did the Burghers forsee? Were they disillusioned or dismayed? How have they taken to the indigenous people ruling them and having to work under them. All these aspects will have to be taken up in various chapters studying the socio-cultural and politico economic aspects of this community. Do the Burghers feel that even after three and a half decades of independence and dwindling economic and job prospects, they would find it easier to mingle with the mainstream of the Sinhalese. The Burghers socially speaking are a fun loving people who lived and maintained a high life style irrespective of their economic conditions during

the rule of the imperial masters, even though they were not scorned at, or treated socially inferior as they feel today compared to the high castes in Sri Lanka.

The Burghers were comparatively better off in their economic condition during the pre-independence period because most of them were gainfully employed by the Portuguese/Dutch and British and they expected to have the same status and facilities even after these foreign rulers left. Later development did not bear out their expectations. The Burghers came to lose their privileged position and were made to seek jobs in competition with the other communities. The Sinhalese in full control of the Government, left the Burghers with not many alternatives. They have either to give-up the charm of English and Sinhalize themselves for a career job or leave the island for better job prospects abroad. Here again the ones who were economically sound made a quick dash for greener pastures, while those left behind, either envy the better off ones who have left or are coming to terms with the land and people they are amidst. The Burghers have been a modern looking, well educated politically articulate people. From the very beginning they made their presence felt on the political scene. They fought tooth and nail for their demands, be it the Dutch or the British. They have spoken boldly and openly and at times they even had to pay for it, but even that did not deter them from fighting back for their rights. The Burghers have not been communal minded in the sense that they fought for their representation or benefits, they even mobilized other communities of Ceylon to fight for such rights. At times their political bluntness and boldness did land them in trouble, but that did not stop them from participation. The Burghers saw that like other communities even they got representation in parliament during the British period. But things as they stand today are quite the reverse of what it had been. The Burghers today neither have a seat in parliament nor is their political participation as active as it was during the pre-independence days. This would be attributed to their diminishing number and their political apathy to the present ruling elite.

All these aspects will be dealt with in greater details in the subsequent chapters.

2

Sri Lanka : The Land And Its People

Sri Lanka is a small, pear shaped, tropical island barely twenty-five miles in the south-east of the tip of India where the waters of the Bay of Bengal meet the Arabian Sea. Nature has been very beautiful and made the island highly fertile and charming to the vision. Sir Emerson Tennent wrote-- "Ceylon from whatever direction it is approached, unfolds a scene of loveliness and grandeur unsurpassed, if it be rivalled, by any land in the Universe. The traveller from Bengal, leaving behind the melancholy delta of the Ganges and the torrid coast of coromandal; or the adventurer from Europe, recently inured to the sands of Egypt and scorched headlands of Arabia, is like entranced by the vision of beauty which expands before him as the island rises from the sea, its lofty mountains covered by luxuriant forests, and its shores, till they meet the ripple of the waves, bright with the foliage of perpetual spring."[1]

The island is roughly 275 miles long north and south and 160 miles across at its widest, encompassing some 25,000 square miles. In the South Central Core of the island, mountains rise generally to a height of 6,000 to 7,000 feet. A few of the peaks are over 8,000 feet. To the West, South and East of this mountainous upthrust, a series of flat land descends like steps, separated by abrupt escarpments, and cut deep narrow valleys, leaving a border of relatively flat "low country" separating the hills from the sea. To the north a long undulating plain extends towards the Jaffna Peninsula and India beyond.

Geologically, Sri Lanka is a Southern continuation of the Indian Deccan Plai Massif. Geologists have put forward that Sri Lanka and Peninsular India along with other land masses that are peripheral to the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic were once parts of a single large continent which began to fragment during mid-Eurassic times. Perhaps this could prove as a reason for similarities between Sri Lanka and the adjacent parts of the Deccan. The climate

1. Tennent, Sir Emerson, *Ceylon* (Longman, 1859).

of Sri Lanka is basically controlled by its location within the tropics, its proximity to the Indian Sub-continent, its insularity and the presence within it of a centrally located mountain mass.

Climate and Topography

The tropical location of Sri Lanka ensures a uniformly high temperature, but maritime influences consequent upon its insularity make it free from thermal extremes that are characteristic of continental interiors. Considering both climate and topographic conditions Sri Lanka may be divided into three major geographical regions, wet, semi-arid and arid. The South-Western part of Sri Lanka is topographically exposed to the incoming moisture laden air masses. Monthly totals of rain rarely fall below 5 inches in this part of the country. The low-lands here have two maxima in the annual cycle of rain, one during the pre—South-West Monsoon months and the other during the convectional cyclonic period of October and November. In the highlands of the South-west, the rainfall peak occurs during the summer monsoon when the monthly total of rain often exceeds 20 inches. This is known as the wet zone. Apart from the South Western parts of Sri Lanka another area of heavy rain, is the Khuckles massif. It is exposed to the rain bearing streams in most parts of the year and hence receives a seasonally well distributed rainfall of over 100 inches. The average annual rainfall in the eastern and northern parts of the island is less than 75 inches. Here unlike in the South-west, there are marked wet and dry seasons, the wet season being the convectional cyclonic period and the early part of the North-East monsoon season (September-January), and the dry period, the season of the South-west Monsoon. This could be termed as the semi-arid zone of Sri Lanka. The arid zone receives the lowest rainfall which are in the eastern and north-western parts of the coastal plain, where in the absence of topographic barriers that induce passing air streams to shed their moisture, the mean annual rainfall is below 50 inches and drought prevails over a greater part of the year.

A Table and illustration giving the annual rainfall in the three zones and indicative of certain trends is given in table 2-1.

Sri Lanka has, thus, been endowed with a warm, tropical climate, well watered in one-third of the area-the wet zone-with a topography which provides space for future cultivation if the island's rainy water can be stored and channelled to the presently dry areas.

The soil and climate in the wet zone is quite suitable for plantation crops like tea, rubber and coconut. Rice is planted on the rich alluvial valley

floors and on laboriously tended hillside terraces. In addition cinnamon, cloves and other spices are also cultivated.

Table-2.1

## Annual Rainfall at Selected Towns in Sri Lanka

(Millimetres)

Town	Region	30 year average 1931-60	1978	1979	1980
Colombo	Wet	2395.5	1954.4	2450.6	1995.9
Ratnapura	Wet	3887.7	3742.5	3490.4	3270.8
Kandy	Wet	2021.8	1924.5	1995.4	1552.6
Nuwara Eliya	Wet	2162.7	2604.6	2195.8	1417.4
Hambantota	Semi-Arid	1075.4	976.5	976.6	1125.5
Anuradhapur	Semi-Arid	1447	1994.7	1371.2	1123.6
Jaffna	Arid	1329.4	1162.0	1391.7	914.0
Tricomalee	Arid	1726.7	1464.6	1473.0	765.3

Source: Statistical Pocket Book of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka 1981 published by the Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo, Sri Lanka. p. 6.

Sri Lanka's subsoil mineral resources are as limited as her subsoil water. Coal and petroleum are totally lacking. Substantial iron-ore resources exist, but are widely scattered. However, Ceylon is the world's leading producer of high-grade graphite. Her gem stones have been famous for generations. Ilmonite, monozite and glass sands are found along the West coast. Mica is also found in sufficient quantity and has been exported for years. And tumbling waters can supply large quantities of electric power if properly harnessed.

Demography

The population of Sri Lanka is increasing at an unprecedented rate, now twice of what it was before 1946. When the British gained control of the entire island in 1815 the population was approximately one million, and in the course of a hundred and forty years, it has multiplied more than eight times. Part of the increase in population was the result of large-scale immigration of Tamil estate labourers brought from South India to work in the tea and rubber estates

MEAN ANNUAL RAINFALL
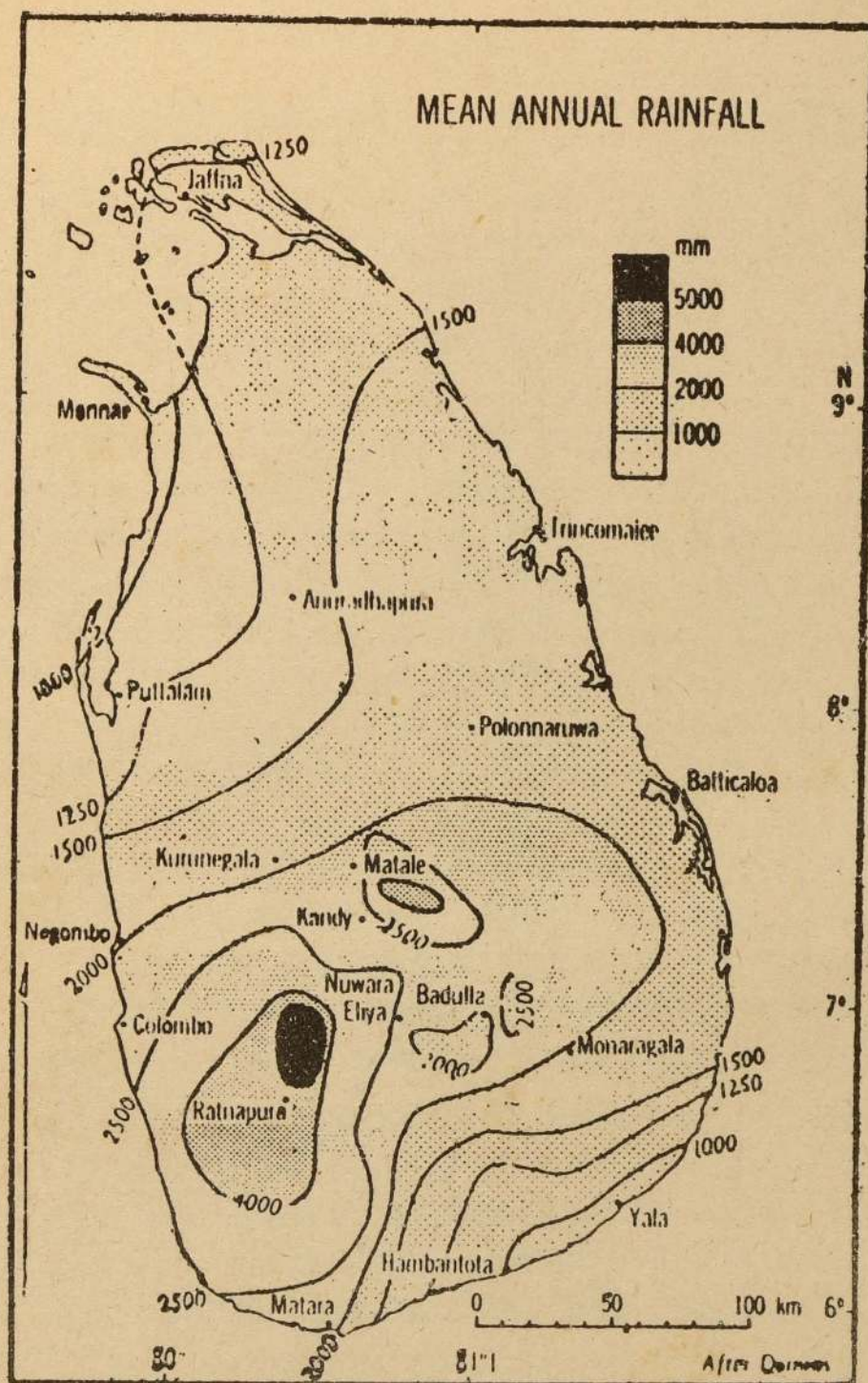
in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the rate of natural increase has long been high and since 1946 it has leaped upward. Before, the population grew at the rate of roughly 1.8 per cent per year. Ten years later the rate was nearly 2.8 per cent. This startling increase in growth rate followed the island-wide use of D.D.T. to control malaria, which had been endemic over most of the island for centuries, and the generallly improved sanitary and health

service.[2] The birth rate has declined slightly; but there has been a more marked decline in infant mortality and deaths among the elderly. In 1948 when Sri Lanka gained its independence there were 7,000,000 people living on the island; ten years later they had increased to 9,000,000. Life expectancy is 68 years as against 55 years in India. This is obviously a result of better health care facilities in Sri Lanka. Thus, there are six times as many hospitals, beds and doctors per thousand population; many more schools and teachers, per capita than those in India.

Socio-Community Life

Sri Lankan society is multi-ethnic and, therefore, an intricate and complex one. The country has a mosaic of self-aware communities distinguished from one another over ethnic, religious or linguistic grounds. With the rise of the Sri Lanka freedom party at the cost of the LSSP since mid-50's, politics has had severe twists towards communalization. There are few parties deriving strength from disciplined organization, and from clear-cut economic revolutionary ideologies, or from an intense struggle for independence. Sri Lanka's political life has been closely bound up with these communal and other traditional social differentiations. Loyalty is still directed to the extended family clan, or to the caste, racial, religious, or linguistic group. An islandwide national identity is yet to be effectively evolved.

Ethnically, the population of Sri Lanka is diverse, yet its composition is sufficiently simple to invite invidious numerical and percentage comparisons, which a more complicated ethnic structure might preclude. The details regarding the total population and percentage share of various groups in that, is provided in the Table 2.2 The overwhelming majority of Sri Lanka's people—nearly 73 per cent as per 1978 estimates—are known as "Sinhalese", widely believed to be descendent from Aryan stock of North India, probably from the Bengal region. Their language is Sinhalese, spoken only in Ceylon with no close contemporary linguistic relation except Bengali. They are largely Buddhist, the devout among them following the Theravada tradition also found in Burma, Thailand and Vietnam. The Sinhalese are concentrated in the wet zone, and the semi-arid zone. The largest minority group are the Ceylon Tamils, who represent eleven per cent of the total population. They are concentrated chiefly in the northern and eastern areas of the island. For centuries the city of Jaffna has been and still

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2. H. Cullumbine,"An Analysis of the Vital Statistics of Ceylon" reprint by the Ceylon Journal of Medical Science, Section D. Volume VII. Parts 3 and 4 (December 1950), p 12. Department of Census and Statistics, Statististical Abstract of Ceylon 1856, Table 37.

continues to be the principal centre of their cultural and religious life. As a people, they are widely believed to be descendents of Tamils who came to Ceylon, in successive waves of immigration and military invasions, from Dravidian South India between A.D. 400 and 1200. Their language is the same as the Tamil spoken in Tamil nadu and they are Hindus.

Although much of Sri Lanka's recent political history can be understood largely in terms of the relations between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority, two other groups are ethnically distinguishable. The Moors and the Burghers. The Moors are of Arab descent, and are mainly concentrated in the western areas and along the west in the Eastern province, although they are found in towns in other parts of the island. They constitute roughly five per cent of the total population and are Muslims. Some of them are farmers, but part of them are traders, businessmen, or the keepers of small shops. Although their sense of communal solidarity is high, their language varies as per the areas of their residence. In Tamil areas, it is Tamil and in Sinhalese areas it is Sinhalese. Their religious language is Arabic, and they appear to be profoundly attached to the religion of 'Islam' and its precepts. As a group, they are not well educated. They were reluctant to enter Christian schools in the early phase of Colonial rule. But in recent decades this reluctance has diminished, and the growth of a non-denominational public school system is rapidly raising their educational level.

Among the rest, Burghers are a tiny but otherwise important ethnic group. They are descendents of children of Portuguese, Dutch and British marriages with Ceylonese. They are largely Christian, often highly educated, and have a reputation for energy, conscientiousness and reliable workmanship. Although they compose less than one percent of the total population, they were active in constitutional reform movements and once played a significant role in governmental and cultural life. They have adopted English as their 'mother tongue' even though they often speak Sinhalese; they wear European clothes and follow European rather than Ceylonese social customs. Mention should be made here that compared to the elderly Burghers, the Burghers of the younger age group are keener to adapt themselves to local conditions and customs. They wear Sinhalese dress more like the local people and even integrate with them. Perhaps they psychologically feel that they would be more acceptable than rebuked, and moreover they have to live within these environs.

In an era of national resurgence the Burghers community as such are considered too westernized. They find emphasis on Sinhalization unacceptable to them. They are believed to have a sense of cultural and racial superiority in

Table-2.2

Population by Race (*In %*)

Race	1946	1953	Percentage Distribution 1963	1971	1977	1978
Low Country Sinhalese	43.60	42.84	42.24	42.84	73.19	73.30
Kandyan Sinhalese	25.84	26.52	28.75	29.20	--	--
Ceylon Tamils	11.01	10.96	11.00	11.20	11.50	11.54
Indian Tamils	11.73	12.03	10.61	9.30	7.46	7.27
Ceylon Moors	6.52	5.73	5.92	6.50	6.84	6.89
Indian Moors	0.53	0.59	0.52	0.20	0.21	0.21
Europeans	0.08	0.08	--	--	--	--
Burghers & Eurasians	0.63	0.52	0.43	0.40	0.34	0.34
Malays	0.34	0.31	0.32	0.30	0.34	0.34
Veddhas	0.04	--	--	--	--	--
Others	0.62	0.40	0.18	0.10	0.11	0.11
All the Races (in thousands)	100.94	99.98	99.97	100.04	99.99	100.00

relation to the less westernized Sinhalese and Tamils. Considering themselves misfit in an era of Sinhalization, many have even attempted to leave the island.

The Malays are another small section of the Muslim community, who descended from soldiers serving in Ceylon during Dutch and British times. Even when having intermarriages with other Muslims they have on the whole maintained their solidarity as a community. The community numbers roughly over 30,000.

The Indian Moors are much more recent immigrants, who came from various parts of India in search of trade. Members of the wealthy 'Borah' community have exercised considerable influence in economic and even in political affairs. In recent years the Indian Moors have shown a desire either to return to India or become citizens of Ceylon.

Examination of the same phenomenon by rural-urban background confirms the trends discussed above. Thus, it is obvious from the table 2.3 that the Burghers and Eurasians as also the Malays are mainly urban-centred communities. More than 3/4 of the people of the communities live in the cities and towns. Some other Muslim communities are also quite largely urban based with 40% and above falling in the category. On the other hand, Sinhalese and Tamils, these two major communities, are mainly rural.

Religion

A small country like Sri Lanka has enough religious diversity as well. Most of the prominent world religions have a substantial strength of population. As is apparent from Table 2.4, in overall terms the Buddhists are in a substantial majority with an approximate share of 2/3 in the total population. The second largest group is of the Hindus. But with a strength of less than 20% they are much smaller a community than the Buddhists. For the rest the Muslims and the Christians have a share of less than 10% in the total population.

But a decennial view as presented in Table 2.4, brings out that the percentage share of the Buddhists and the Muslims is going up in total population, being up from 64.5% and 6.6% just before independence in 1946, to 67.4% and 7.1% in 1971. The share of two other minorities, viz. the Hindus and the Christians is down respectively from 19.8% and 9.1% in 1946 to 19.6% and 7.7% in 1971. The change in the proportionate strength might be due to two major factors: immigration and fall in population growth rate. Both the factors might have brought about a fall in the population of the Hindus and the Christians as both of them are better educated and more westernized in various respects than the Buddhists and the Muslims. Finally, though the data are not

presented in tabular form, one may say that factors of language and religion coincide very largely. The Buddhists are an over whelmingly Sinhala speaking community while the Hindus are over-whelmingly Tamil speaking and the Christians have a preference for English.

Table-2.3

Distribution of ethnic groups by place of residence, 1971 (by per cent)-Urban, Rural and Estate.

Ethnic Groups	Urban	Rural	Estate
Low Country Sinhalese	28.0	70.0	1.3
Kandyan Sinhalese	6.6	92.0	1.4
Sri Lankan Tamils	35.0	60.0	5.0
Indian Tamils	9.3	11.0	80.0
Sri Lankan Moors	44.0	55.0	0.7
Indian Moors	40.0	38.0	22.0
Burghers and Eurasians	80.0	17.0	2.7
Malays	75.0	22.0	2.7
Others	71.0	24.0	5.4
All groups	388.9	389.0	121.2

Source : The two most useful demographic surveys are UNESCAP. *Population of Sri Lanka*, Country Monograph series No. 4, Bangkok. 1976, and Department of Census and Statistics. *The Population of Sri Lanka* (Special publication for the 1974 World Population Year), Colombo. 1974.

Caste Structure

Another way in which the island's people distinguish themselves from one another is along caste lines. The structure of caste distinction in Sinhalese areas is much looser than it is in Tamil areas of Ceylon or in India. In the urban areas especially its social and political importance is diminishing. No doubt caste considerations are less significant even in rural areas than they were fifty years ago. Nevertheless, significant social and political developments cannot be properly understood without an appreciation of caste differentiations. Closely corresponding to the high status traditionally accorded to the cultivator-the man who tilled the soil in the Ceylonese feudal system--the highest status is generally applied to the 'Cultivators' or Goyigama caste in the Sinhalese Society. As

Table-2.4
Population by Religion, Census Years
(Thousands)

Religion Groups	1946	%	1953	%	1963	%	1971	%
All religion	6,675	100.0	8,098	100.0	10,582	100.0	12,711	100.0
Buddhists	4,295	54.5	5,209	64.3	7,002	66.3	8,508	67.4
Hindus	1,320	19.8	1,611	19.9	1,958	18.5	2,239	17.6
Christians	603	9.1	724	8.9	885	8.4	987	7.7
Muslims	437	6.6	524	6.8	724	6.7	910	7.1
Others	2	-	12	0.1	12	0.1	8	0.1

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, *Statistical Pocket Book*, 1973, Colombo.

might be expected when caste system originally derives its legitimacy from such a functional distinction, more than 60 per cent of the population has been in the highest caste. Such a large caste was necessarily divided into sub-castes, the more exclusive being those closer to the rulers than the more numerous who tilled the fields. Beneath the Goyigama have been a series of service castes such as smiths, potters, barbers, tailors, drummers and washermen, etc. Even to-day, when caste distinctions are far less rigid and less important than they used to be, the trades of potters and carpenters are carried on traditional lines. With few incentives for innovation, the arts of music, drumming, and the dance suffer because of their traditional association with low-caste functions.

In low-country Sinhalese districts, the caste structure is coming under greater pressure than in the Kandyan areas. New economic methods and urbanization are undermining traditional ways of doing things. There is a disassociation between traditional social status and newly gained economic status. Men who move to the towns and earn good living are reluctant to emulate or adopt the traditional manners of those of 'better' birth who otherwise may be no better off financially. Indeed the anonymity of the urban areas is one of the attractions for village youth of lower status who come to develop a sense of deprivation and alienation in the village setup. Face to face relationships become agonizing to them.

In the low country moreover, there are certain caste groups who do not accept the Goyigama claim of being the highest status caste. One such caste is the 'Karavas' or that of the fisherman. In the Sinhalese system they are considered by many to be of less distinguished standing. However, the Karavas sometimes challenge Goyigama presumptions. They claim descent from Kshatriya warriors who came in the entourage of the Indian Kings who formerly ruled Sri Lanka, and warriors are superior to cultivators in the ranking as per Indian Cultural practices. The Karavas were among the first to undertake estate agriculture and business modelled on European enterprises. Another enterprising groups is known as the Salagamas or 'Cinnamon peelers', and they claim descent from Brahmin ancestry. Another active, though small caste is the Durava. In the Tamil Hindu areas, caste stratifications are sharper and the top position of the upper cultivator caste-The Vellala-has not yet been challenged, either by modern economic conditions or by other caste-conscious groups.

It may appear that an outsider tends to exaggerate the political importance of caste distinction. There are a few intraversable caste lines, except at the bottom of the social pyramid. Most people are conscious of the caste background of their friends and associates. It would appear that caste is still important, though not always decisive, in matters of choices of a close

friendship and marital ties. In organizations of all kinds where castes inter-
mingle whether it be the public service, business houses, or educational, there
remains a strong tendency for men of one caste to trust fellows of their own
caste than those from other castes or communities. Trust and confidence tend to
be shared within a community. Thus, notwithstanding changes towards
loosening of caste solidarities, there would appear to be a subtle, but
nevertheless real, informal net work of camaraderie and mutual assistance based
on caste loyalties. Accordingly as in India, caste is relevant to politics,
especially when candidates are selected by political parties to field in the
contest. However, various trends are working to diminish the significance of
these inherited ethnic and pedigree distinctions.

Social Change and Class-Structure

Long association with the West and its new technoindustrial culture
(longest in the sub-continent, in fact) has contributed to the process of economic
change in a significant way. The ancient caste system and other structures are in
a melting pot. Western education and new economic opportunities provided by
plantation agriculture and ever-expanding secondary and tertiary sectors have
led to emergence of new social formations and roles. New class structure based
on achieved rather than traditionally ascribed status is gradually coming up and
stabilizing. Accordingly, intragroup relations are also being reinterpreted and
redefined.

By 1948 when Sri Lanka became independent, a number of changes had
taken place in Sri Lankan society. In fact, politico national movements have
followed from, rather than preceded and shaped, the process of social change.

Myrdal's depiction of the Sinhalese scene at the time of Sri Lanka's
independence in 1948 is quite apt.[3] "Political independence came to Ceylon in a
totally different manner than it did to Burma. In case of Sri Lanka there was no
Japanese occupation, no revolutionary ferment, and no sudden break with the
past. The colony did not even experience the sort of liberation struggle the
Indian National Congress organized. There was no civil disobedience or non-co-
operation and no imprisonment of national leaders."[4] "Ceylon emerged from
colonial rule through a process of peaceful negotiation but...this was not an

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3. Mydral, Gunnar, *Asian Drama*, Vol. I, Penguin Books, 1968, pp. 155-157.

4. *Ibid*, p. 155.

altogether unmixed blessing."5 While Myrdal and other scholars note the absence of political education and broad composite nationalism emerging from a broad united front strategy against the colonial rule, Sri Lankans have gained much from plantation economy developed by the British. Myrdal has also observed that Sri Lanka has for some time enjoyed much higher levels of living than India due to its strong plantation Industry. Malnutrition is far less. The level of literacy is very high. Inequalities are generally much less than those in India. The Social stratification in Sri Lanka is more egalitarian and women are less sub-jugated and oppressed. The existing inequalities are less rigidly rooted and unyielding. The caste system is not as obtrusive as in India. Caste distinction in Sri Lanka are penetrated by class distinction. This could be possible as Sri Lanka has enjoyed a longer history of westernization with more economic and professional opportunities for its people than did India. Sri Lanka's social structure is divided both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, it is divided between a privileged, well-to-do, English educated upper class and an indigenously educated lower class. Horizontally, it is divided between different ethnic communities such as Sinhalese. Ceylon Tamils, Indian Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and Christians. The Indian Tamils are labourers on the plantation. They are a lower-class group. In Sri Lanka, economic divisions of its populace cannot be clearly made because community, class, language and religion are correlated in an intricate manner.6

The following classes are generally identified in Sri Lanka :

1. The Upper Class

The English educated Sinhalese; Top bureaucratic and power elites, The indigenously but well educated Sinhalese and the top businessmen including tea planters.

2. The Upper Middle Classes

Small businessmen, Land Owners, Traders, Middle order Civil Servants and Money lenders.

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5. *Ibid*, p. 155-56.

6. *Ibid*. p. 346.

3. The Lower Middle Classes

(*Rural Intelligentsia*): School Teachers, Notaries, Indigenous Ayurvedic Physicians, Buddhist Clergy (monks).

4. The Lower Classes

Small Peasants, Plantation Labourers, Landless Agricultural Labourers and Menial workers.

The above classification is more a suggestive rather than an exhaustive scheme. It does not provide details about specific sub-classes within the four broad categories. These classes are also not simple economic divisions in Sri Lankan Society.

While casteism provides a basis of social solidarities in Sri Lanka, even in towns, people draw a circle of friendship usually from among people of their own as well as other caste groups. Mostly, the Western educated persons are likely to extend their circles more widely particularly when they devote to social welfare activities or have an interest in cultural pursuits impelling them to join societies concerned with the promotion of arts or other intellectual matters, or of sporting activities or of social welfare programmes. Between the two world wars their horizons widened considerably. Some of the young men and women were beginning to break away from the trammels of closely integrated family life. The spread of the film theatre also accounted for development of a psyche approving and accelerating such trends. Furthermore western culture including dancing and club practices which were depreciated by most Sinhalese and Tamils in the past, came to be favourably looked upon and became popular among the upper middle class circles. This provided a fillip to the processes of modernization.

These changes were note worthy in as much as they greatly affected the position of women also. There came to be organised women's movement between the two wars, though it has not been very militant and assertive, still, its significance was that the Sri Lankan women were beginning to come out of their earlier obscurity and confinement to the house. Aspiring for prominence in society, women in urban areas developed interest, in social service, in cultural and learned societies, in sports and even in politics. They were beginning to enter fields of regular employment other than traditional ones as teachers, nurses, and telephone operators. All this has not at all been pleasing to the more conservative sections of Sri Lankan society.

Westernization only affected the upper and middle classes markedly. Of course, there have been various material developments of which the working classes were able to take advantage. Most significant of these perhaps, was the advent of the motor bus, which between the two world wars began to run to many villages which the railways did not and could never reach. The railways themselves had been a factor in beginning to shake and move a hitherto largely immobile society. The motor bus accelerated this process very greatly. The villagers could now move out of their villages easily-if they had the money for the fares-and go to a neighbouring town, or even to Colombo for shopping and marketing, or to a cinema. Cinemas were being put up in many of the small towns, or going around in mobilevans. There were very few Sinhalese films. Indian films in Tamil and even in Hindi became very popular.

The motor bus also enabled all areas, however remote, to get the Sinhalese or Tamil newspapers regularly, and with the spread of education, the villagers could either read them or find in the village some literate to read to them aloud.

It is generally held that the process of westernization has gone further and deeper in Sri Lanka than in any other Asian country. This is probably correct. But to estimate how far and how deep, is anything but simple. There is today a strong reaction against Westernization, which came to a head in form of results of the general elections in 1956. If one quotes G.C. Mendis from his book Ceylon : Today and Yesterday'-"we must also see that we do not allow our emotions to get the better of facts in making our assessment of the past and minimise the importance of the vast changes that have resulted from the impact of the West, with its Science and Technology, on our social life, though such changes have not kept pace with those in our political and economic life."

The Economic Structure

Like other countries in South Asia, Sri Lanka is predominantly agricultural. Roughly 55 per cent of the gross national product is accounted for by growing, processing and transporting agricultural commodities and more than half of the gainfully employed work in agriculture and forestry.[7] Not only does Sri Lanka specialize in agriculture but the bulk of its agricultural activity is concentrated on producing only three products-tea, rubber and coconut-which employ 3O per cent of the work force. But indirect employment from these products is even greater. Large numbers of workers in transport, shipping

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7.   Six Year Programme of Investment. p. 157.

banking and commerce happen to get employment just for handling their transport or dealings in them.[8] These three export crops alone constitute 35-40 per cent of the country's gross national products and account for 90-95 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. Obviously this is at the cost of the food grains production. Product specialization has gone so far that nearly one-half of all food consumed must be imported even though the economy is mainly agricultural. In a society traditionally concentrating on the cultivation of paddy as rice is the average man's staple diet one-half of country's rice requirements are met from imports. Ninety per cent of curry stuffs, pulses and dried fish important for curries, and 100 per cent of wheat and sugar are also purchased from abroad.

Like most small countries in the third world whether they have been politically subjugated to Western colonialism or not, Sri Lanka also has its national economy inter woven with the fabric of world trade and thereby with part of the world economy dominated by Western powers. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka has been able to profit greatly from its unusual agricultural and climatic resources for producing high-return export products mainly tea, rubber and coconut. Because of these fortuitous circumstances, the per capita income of an average Sri Lankan is the highest in South Asia. The gross national product per capita is nearly two and one-half times that of India's and Burma's.[9]

The distribution of real income compares favourably with India and other countries in the region Therefore, contrasts between the rich and the poor are less sharp here than elsewhere in the region.

The incomes of the average Sri Lankans are particularly dependent on the country's terms of trade. There are sharp fluctuations in the world marketing conditions for its three major export crops-tea, rubber and coconut and in prices of imported manufactured goods. Gross comparisons of one country with another are highly deceptive if they are used as a measure of contentment; but they demonstrate that in real terms the Island's people are relatively well off in comparison to their fellow Asians. In Sri Lankan villages a number of huts have furniture. Medical practitioners either indigenous or from the government service, are widely dispersed. Large numbers of villagers are able to travel to Colombo for public fairs and on religious or other occasions. Transportation is

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8. Ibid, 161, 209.

9. Ceylon's Gross National Product per capita has been calculated as $ 125 as compared to $ 59 per capita in India

relatively easily available. There are ten times as many vehicles and twenty times as many miles of road per capita than there are in India. Rail-road stations in Sri Lanka are not the nightly shelter for thousands upon thousands of labourers as they are in India.

It would appear likely that at least the villagers who are not in debt-roughly 65 per cent of the rural population-are able to meet their primary needs although savings are rare.[10] It is those who move to towns and cities where cash returns are higher. But there also they are unable to save much as under the impact of modernization, their needs have much increased.

The unemployment picture is not clear. Employment exchanges registered 80,000 in 1956 a figure that went upto 1,00,000 in 1958 but this is considered an under statement. Unemployment is said to be particularly widely prevalent among the Kandyan peasantry crowded into their restricted villages, and among the educated youth from the expanded schools system. Although Sri Lanka's population has lived rather better than any other people in South or South-east Asia, there are signs that after the initial improvement following independence, standards of consumption have leveled off. Early increases in national income per capita also seems to have ceased. Present rates of capital formation appear inadequate to induce a sufficient expansion of production, though all resources by no means have been tapped.

Economic Problems

The central economic problem facing the Sri Lankan government is how to diversify the economy and, at the same time increase productivity. Diversification would free the country from its very dependence upon three estate crops whose price fluctuate widely on the world market and whose future is uncertain. The only solution is to reduce Sri Lanka's import bills perhaps by one half or more, by increasing the local production of food. These are, thus, a series of intricate decisions facing the Island's statesmen in their efforts to diversify economy, raise productivity, improve standards of living, open new opportunities to the educated, and free Sri Lanka from her dependence on these commodities in the fluctuating world market.

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10. Government of Ceylon, Preliminary Report on the Economic Survey of Rural Ceylon 1950 (Sessional paper XI-1951), p 13. This compares very favourably with the pre-war figure of 85 per cent debt free families.

Growing Communalization

Compared with her neighbours-India, Pakistan or Burma Sri Lanka has been remarkably free from ardent communal strife under the imperial rule. Until 1958 the under-current of Communal antagonism had never reached the point of violent hostility of the partition year in India. The national movement towards independence did not have the same religious caste that Gandhi's intensely Hindu appeal evoked among his followers. Nor Mohammad Ali Jinnah arose with a vision to ensure a religious ambivalence for the minority community by insurrection to assert their independent character, as in Burma. When we mention inter-ethnic exchanges in Sri Lanka, though we do include the Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors and Burghers, yet it boils down to basically the Tamils and Sinhalese relations with each other. The Moors, Malays and Burghers as a community may not get on very well with the majority, yet there are as such no open clashes or conflicts as is in the case of the Tamils and Sinhalese. Sinhalese and Tamils have been living on the island together for a thousand years. Sinhalese and Tamil Kings fought one another, particularly between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, but in so far as evidence is available, the people subsisted on the island as best as they could without conflict.[11] In some predominantly Sinhalese areas, Tamils entered and gradually adopted Sinhalese customs; in areas largely Tamil, Sinhalese lived with Tamils. On the whole, the two populations did not intermingle. In the 13th century the Sinhalese gradually shifted to the wet zone jungle areas to the South, and the Tamils fell back on their center in the Northern Jaffna district and the dry zone eastern coast leaving a relatively uninhabited territory in between. Except along the coast in two provinces where intermingling continued, language, religion, territory and cultural ways divided the two people.[12] Centuries of mutual separation accentuated their differences. Under the British, the island became a single administrative and economic unit, and once again Tamils and Sinhalese began to mingle where members of both communities had lived together for generations as neighbouring peasants and villages, there developed a reasonable degree of understanding and mutual tolerence. They were self-conscious about their differences, and mutually suspicious but they were not intensely hostile before the language agitation of 1955-56.

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11. G. C. Mendis, "The causes of Communal Conflict in Ceylon", *Ceylon* HistoriCal *Journal*, I (April 1943), pp. 41-49.

12. North Western and Eastern Provinces.

Economic competition between the two have been a principal source of contention. There have always been more low-country Sinhalese than Tamils in Public Service. But in relation to the total number of each community in the population the situation was different before independence. There have been proportionately more Tamils and many more Burghers than Sinhalese. This is evident from table 2.5. Presently the situation in regard to proportionate share of various communities, is quite the opposite of what it was earlier.Presently, the share of majority community, the Sinhalese, has increased substantially.[13]

The other ground for ethnic conflict is that, each thinks his culture is older and superior. The Tamils view their culture as a sound integrity, the strength of immediate life and vistas of thousands of years and as less touched by the Western ways than the Sinhalese culture. The Sinhalese view their culture as unique and differentiated, and that they cannot depend on others to help them perpetuate it. Cultural revival particularly among the Sinhalese, led them to identify their greatness of Lanka with the Sinhalese alone and to feel that their culture was threatened by the presumably more vigorous Tamil. Language reforms was also one of the ingredients of communal antagonism and this brought about open conflict between these two ethnic groups by the end of the first decade of independence. Thus, it appears that apart from the geographical differentiation, cultural and linguistic plurality the people of Sri Lanka are facing some similar problems as faced by the other South Asian countries.

The first thing to be noted about the minority or nationality problem is that it is not something peculiar to Ceylon. Not only other developing countries, but even the developed nations which long ago had accomplished their bourgeois democratic revolutions and therefore had resolved these questions are faced to-day with similar problems. Uneven economic development is not confined only to the relationship between the imperialist countries itself, this relationship is reproduced.

In developing countries the problem is further aggravated. In conditions of under-development, stagnation and above all the pre-capitalist heritage which weighed down heavily on these societies lever of State power is

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13. For an illustrative purpose one may quote here a case cited by A. T. Wilson. It is mentioned that out of 23000 teachers appointed between 1971 and 1974, 18OOO were Sinhalese, 1867 Tamils, 2507 Muslims. Rest belonged to other communities. The share of the Burghers is not given separately. But obviously in the IV category it should be pretty less. One may estimate it to be around 5% or even less against nearly 80% of the Sinhalese, just double of what it used to be in the early 20th century. A. J. Wilson : *Politics in Sri Lanka*, 1947-1979, p. 11.

Table 2.5

**Ethnic Distribution in Select Occupations 1901- 1921**

Communities	1901 Males in Select Professions		1911 Males in Select Professions		1921 Total Ceylonese Male Population		Total Ceylonese Adult Male Population	
	Figures 2	% 3	Figures 4	% 5	Figures 9	% 6	Figures 8	% 9
Low-country Sinhalese	349	39.4	912	42.5	1,005,137	49.1	509,909	49.0
Kandyan Sinhalese	15	1.6	75	3.5	575,459	28.1	281,045	27.0
Sinhalese	364	41.0	987	46.0	1,580,596	77.2	790,954	76.0
Ceylon Tamils	214	24.1	684	31.9	263,048	12.8	139,361	13.3
Burghers	282	31.8	380	17.7	14,507	0.7	83,070	0.7
Moors	16	1.0	40	1.8	157,578	7.7	7,842	7.9
Others	9	1.0	51	2.3	27,365	1.3	18,970	1.8
CEYLONESE	885	100.0	2,142	100.0	2,043,094	100.0	1,040,207	100,0

Source: Michel Roberts; "Elite Formation and Elites, 1832-1931" in *Collective indentities : Nationalism and Protest in modern Sri Lanka.* Ed. Michel Roberts, Marga Institute, Colombo 1979.

a powerful aid to the dominant group in the 'rat race' and this dominance is based on the discrimination of culture, caste, religious or linguistic minority groups. In some countries of the third world such discrimination is open as in Pakistan which proclaims itself the 'Islamic Republic' while in others, it is masked, despite lip service to democracy, secularism and even socialism.
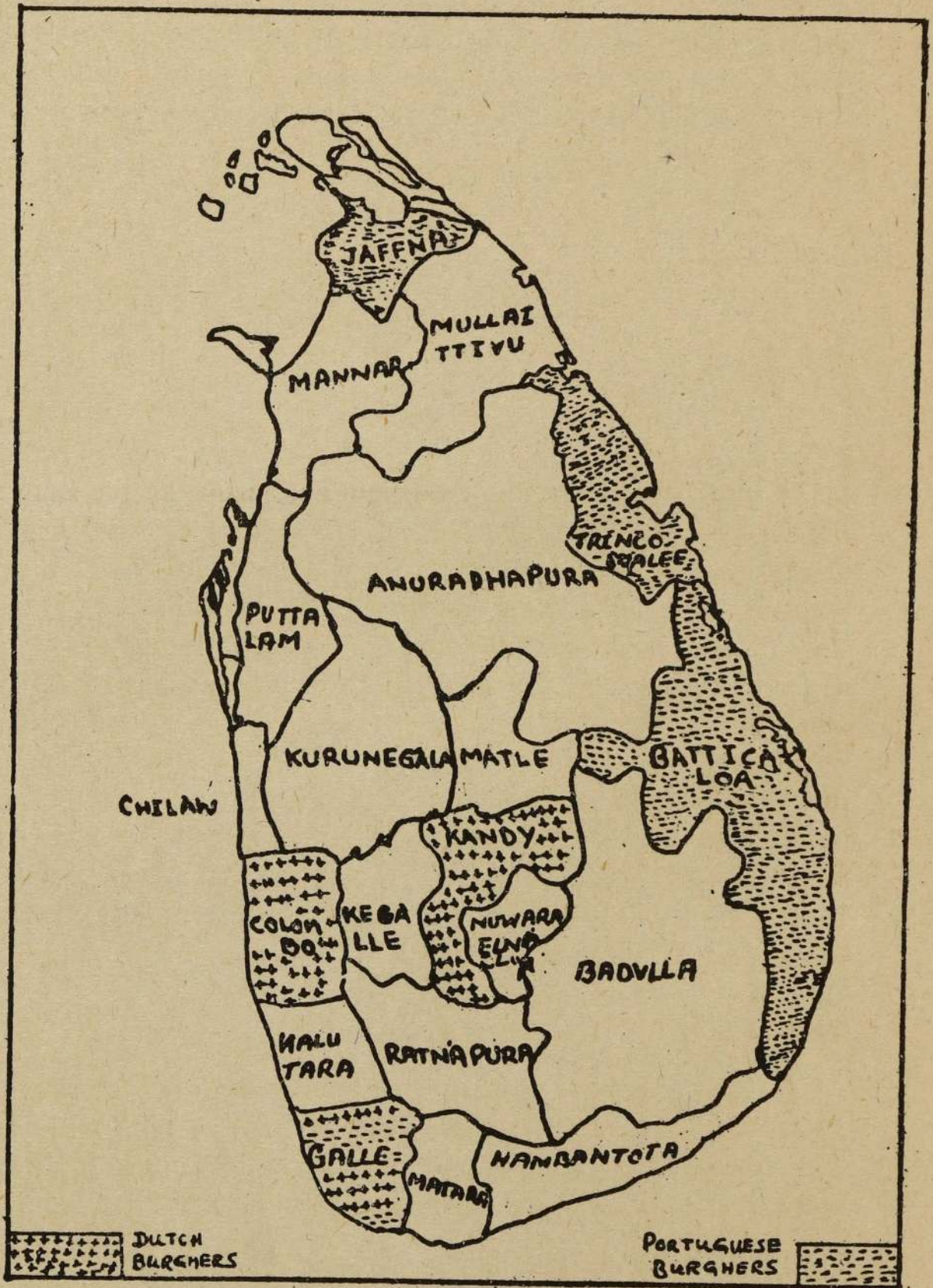
Districts Where the Dutch & Portuguese
Burghers are Concentrated

3
Origin and Growth of The Community

Before analysing aspects like the socio-cultural or political life, it would not be out of place to traverse into the origin and history of the Burgher community. For this it is essential to go back to the early history of the island of Sri Lanka or Ceylon as it was known earlier. An attempt has been made to try and be as precise in the historical background. This has been done mainly to get an 'insight' into the community's characteristics, features and behavioural norms as they evolved over centuries and determine patterns of interaction *vis-a-vis* other communities. This is also to see how they accepted some of the traits of the imperial masters, of whose off-springs they are. It also enables us to see how they have managed to retain certain traditions, customs, and in some cases even names. One may mention here that the tiny island had three sets of imperial masters in quick succession. The Portuguese, first to land, were displaced by the Dutch who themselves were replaced by the British, all occurring in a span of four centuries.

The Portuguese Consolidation

The western world made its first notable appearance in Ceylon in A.D. 1501, when a Portuguese sailor visited the island and made a trade agreement with the Sinhalese King. The event is commemorated by the carving of the Portuguese royal arms and the data on a rock which is still preserved.

The history of Ceylon upto 1500 is a confused record of wars, invasions, usurpations and dynastic rivalries. At times the island enjoyed a fitful independence; at others it came under the domination of Indian or other Asian powers. From the thirteenth century the country was virtually partitioned into two kingdoms; a Tamil kingdom in the north, and a Sinhalese kingdom in the South-West. But there was no stability and effective machinery of Government. "When the sixteenth Century dawned, Ceylon was like a ripe fruit waiting to be

plucked by the first predatory passerby."[1] The predatory passer-by was not long in appearing. Accounts of the first encounters between Portugal and Ceylon vary. But it is true that during the first twenty years or so of the Sixteenth century, the Portuguese established a fort at Colombo and persuaded the Sinhalese rulers to become a tributary of the King of Portugal. In the succeeding years the Portuguese extended their influence by taking advantage of the internal quarrels and rivalries within the Sinhalese royal family.

In occupying Ceylon, the Portuguese had two aims in view. One was the exploitation of the extremely valuable cinnamon industry; the other was the conversion of the people to Christian faith. Of their methods in pursuing these aims, little that is favourable can be said. The record of the Sixteenth Century in Ceylon is one of almost unrelieved misery. The tide of war ebbed and flowed treacheries, cruelties and massacres being common from on all sides. The Portuguese never succeeded in gaining control of the whole island. Even when it was formally annexed to the dominions of the King of Portugal in 1597, the Kandyan Kingdom in the interior remained unconquered and unsubmissive.

The Dutch Take Over

It was in that same year that the Dutch established a trading station in Java. Their aims were strictly commercial. They were out to capture the spice business from the Portuguese, managed to get into touch with the King of Kandy who welcomed these potential allies against the oppressors of his country. In 1612 an agreement was signed by which the Dutch were given certain concessions in return for promises of help in fighting the Portuguese. The latter attempted time and again to bring the Kandyan Kingdom under control, but their efforts met with disaster after disaster. From 1638 onwards, the Dutch began to provide military support to the Kandyan resistance, and proceeded to occupy and garrison the forts which they captured from the Portuguese.

In 1646 Holland and Portugual ceased to be at war, and the island was, in effect partitioned between them. The Dutch were left in control of the cherished cinnamon producing area. Although the Kandyan ruler while seeking Dutch help, had no intentions of exchanging one master for another, the Dutch East India Company, once established in the island, was there to stay. The King was obliged to agree to the Dutch setting up some form of civil administration in the area under their control. In 1652 the Dutch felt strong enough to break the

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1. S D. Bailey, *Ceylon*. p. 33, 1952.

international truce and attack the Portuguese with the aid and support of the Kandyan King. Six years of hostilities followed. In 1655 Colombo fell. Two years later the Dutch take-over of Jaffna left Portugal with no foot-hold in the island which she had dominated for a century and a half.

The Imperial Rule and Its Impact

The Portuguese begueathed to the people of Ceylon a mixed bag of both sweet and bitter memories. Against the true tales of cruelty and extortion, must be set the equally true record of the beneficial work of many of the missionaries that came with the imperial rulers. They spread out modern education in the island. The primary purpose of the mission schools was, of course, to convert children to Christianity. The Portuguese had their religious preachers who belonged to the Society of Jesus known for their educational bent. The Governments under the British and Dutch also showed some concern to provide education but not on a similar plane. The British showed no great enthusiasm for it except during the period of Governor Brownings, who had a number of schools opened. These were missionary schools. Upto 1832 various protestant missionary societies opened a total of 235 schools with about 10,000 pupils. One of these societies was the American Congregationalist Mission which started its activities in 1816 in Jaffna peninsula and had a continuous history of teaching there. The school they established was upto secondary standard; it ultimately came to be known as Jaffna College. The Church Missionary Society (Anglican) opened a similar school at Kottee, near Colombo, about the same time.

The first two institutions for higher education were the Law College and the Medical College. There had been some qualification for legal practice for forty years before 1873, when a Council of Legal Education was set up and the Law College started; though examinations for both proctors (solicitors) and advocates (barristers) had for a long time been held. By the twenties the qualification for entrance to the Law College was Intermediate Arts examination of London University. Quite a number of advocates went to England, entered one of the Inns of Court, and became members of the English Bar. The Medical College was begun in 1870. The degree (L. M S. Ceylon) of this college came to be recognized by the British Medical Association, which made it possible for young doctors of ability and with the necessary means (or by loans) to proceed to Britain and enter straight away for the higher British medical degree such as F. R. C. S.

In 1893 a Government Technical College came into existence. It was really not upto the standard of the Medical College of the Law College.

This was the contribution of the missionary institutions in the island of Ceylon.

The position on the departure of the Portuguese was that the King of Kandy was nominally the ruler of the whole of Ceylon. In practice, his power extended only over such parts of the country as were not under the control of the Dutch. From 1635 to 1687 the Kandyan throne was occupied by King Rajasinha. He was a well educated man and in many ways an able administrator, but inexperienced in world politics and incapable of preventing the Dutch from getting a much tighter grip on the country than the Portuguese had ever had. However, he and his successors succeeded in maintaining the independent identity of the kingdom at least in formal sense throughout the period of the Dutch occupation.

In fact, however, the Dutch themselves were not interested in conquest, only in trade. They had not even the strong missionary zeal of the Catholic Portuguese. To them, Ceylon was an estate that called for general development and for better returns. They set out to realize the objective as best as they might. The lowland region of the country was firmly in the hands of the company, which proceeded to open it up by constructing roads and bridges, introducing new crops and new industries, and providing a certain amount of social services. The people living directly under the Company's rule enjoyed peace and security. In its dealings with the Kandyan Kingdom the Company prefered to promote its own interest by flattery and diplomacy rather than waste good money on military adventures. The first thing the Dutch had to do was to establish law and order and a settled government under which commercial operations could be carried on successfully. They found the country in a state of chaos as a result of the wars, Portuguese maladministration and the inefficiency of the local authorities. They proceeded, therefore, to re-organize it. The areas under direct Dutch control at the outset of the period of Dutch occupation were the coastal regions of the South-West and the extreme North. For administrative purposes the controlled areas were divided into three 'Commanderies' or provinces.

For a hundred years the Dutch continued methodically and industriously to develop the trade and productivity of their Ceylon estate. Dutch citizens (Burghers) settled in the island in considerable numbers and made it their home. Relations with the rulers of the interior country had their ups and downs, but there were few spectacular incidents. In 1739 the last Sinhali King died, and a new dynasty of South Indian origin succeeded to the Kandyan throne. The new rulers adopted a more aggressive attitude towards the Dutch than their predecessors, and in 1760 open hostilities broke out, but in 1766 the

Kandyan King was obliged to enter into a fresh agreement by which the Dutch not only regained all their former lands but also were conceded control over the whole sea-board of the island

The Dutch were now at the height of their power in Ceylon. Trade was booming, and the Company was paying fantastic dividends to its fortunate share-holders. The Kandyan Kingdom had been reduced to impotence and cut off from all contact with the outside world. To the lucrative business of dealing in agricultural products, the pearl fishery, now entirely in Dutch hands, added an important source of revenue. To the Dutch Settlers in the island the prospects must have seemed bright indeed. In fact, however, the end of their dominion was in sight. The revolutions in France and America were to have worldwide repercussions. Holland and her colonial empire were inevitably involved in the struggle for the command of the seas. Ceylon was a pawn in the international contest.

Historians can find but a few kind words to say about the Portuguese occupation, but at least the Portuguese took an interest—even if not always a benevolent one—in the country and the people. The Dutch when they took over, did their best to eliminate all traces of Portuguese influence, yet the legacies of the first European conquerors survive to this day. They survive in many family names and in a large number of words taken from the Portuguese speech into the Sinhalese language. But above all they survive in the flourishing state of the Roman Catholic Church, which is still the most considered body of the Christians in the island. Whatever may be said against the Portuguese, the faith which their missionaries implanted in their converts was firm enough to withstand persecution and deprivation of the sacraments during the Dutch period. As Mr H.W. Codrington observed, "Such a result can not have come from a nation wholly bad"[2] The Portugues were free from racial prejudices and mixed freely with the people of the country, both the Sinhalese and the Tamil. The Dutch on the other hand, very much kept themselves to themselves. Their rule was just and not unkindly, but they had no concern for the Ceylonese as people, or for the country except as a source of profit. They introduced the reform, religion of their own homeland, and did their best to supress Catholicism as well as Buddhism. Acceptance of the reformed faith was a necessary passport to the favour of the Dutch authorities, and many thousands of nominal converts were made; but little was in fact done to promote the spiritual welfare of the people, and the reformed Church never took roots in the land as

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2. Williams, Harry., *A Short History of Ceylon*, 1926, p. 130.

the Roman Catholic Church had under the Portuguese. Still less did it in any sense replace Buddhism as the religion adhered to by the majority of the Sinhalese people.

As the eighteenth century drew towards its close, the scenes were already being shifted in preparation for a new act in the Ceylon drama. The hopes of the Dutch Settlers faded away as Holland herself had to become involved in disastrous warfare. The trade on which they depended had been swept off the seas. "The whole rotting fabric of the Dutch occupation, as much a disappointment to them as it was an incubus to the islanders, was tottering to its fall, and like an over-ripe plum the colony was ready to fall into the basket of the British".3 Here it is not intended to discuss the historical back-ground of the British regime in Sri Lanka, as it will be discussed in the political attitude and behaviour of the Burgher community.

Origin of The Burgher Community

A brief historical reference of the Portuguese and Dutch history here gives an insight as to how these two countries came to Sri Lanka for purely commercial purposes, but then they slowly and cleverly got a strong grip on the island. The mixing of these races with the local population resulted in the origin of another ethnic community namely, the Burghers, and both countries left a group representing their progeny viz. the Dutch and the Portuguese Burghers. In this chapter an attempt has been made to define the term Burgher and also show the distinction between the Dutch and the Portuguese Burghers.

The result of the imperial rule gave birth to a new ethnic group namely the Burghers or even the term Eurasian would be a correct terminology. The members of the Burgher community harboured a superiority complex when they interacted with the local population. There are a few factors responsible for this complex. Firstly, most of the Burghers especially the Dutch Burghers had a very fair complexion as compared to the local population. Secondly, their language and mannerism of life style and speech, all these coupled together on the model of the Dutch and the Portuguese, made the Burghers feel that they were the next after their imperial masters. The way they would treat the rulers, they in turn should receive the same type of treatment from the local people. The Burghers quite often looked down upon the local population, and would deem it an insult to be treated on par with them, be it social or political rights (the socio-political aspects will be dealt with in greater detail in the respective chapters which

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3.   Williams Harry., *A Short History of Ceylon*, 1926, p. 101

follow). Since the Burgher due to the superiority complex kept aloof from the masses there was a very little process of socialisation with other communities. There was more of intra-community socialization than the inter-community one. The Burghers as a community have been so conscious of their ancestry that there is found even a distinction between the Dutch and the Portuguese Burghers, the former considering themsleves superior to the latter. This aspect has also been dealt with in detail in the latter part of this chapter.

The Community as such would keep itself in isolation from the rest of the local population and this attitude of their's did not help them in the long run. In fact, it had an adverse re-action after independence, because the local people whom they kept at a distance, now got the upper hand on this community known as snobbish to the local population. The Burghers were faced with two alternatives, either leave the country or mingle with the mainstream of the Sinhalese population. The community, presently a very tiny one, and that too gradually developing in numerical strength enjoyed a high status and played a vital role in the politico-administrative processes of the imperial era. Considering this, it is proposed to discuss on the foregoing pages the meaning of the term 'Burgher' and their role in historical context.

Who Are The Burghers?

The word 'Burgher' is of Dutch origin. With the formation of the Dutch East Indian Company, Dutchmen as well as other Europeans came to Ceylon as servants of the Company, or to seek fortunes through trade on their own. To differentiate them from the official class, those who came on their own were called Burghers and were given certain civic rights and privileges. Initially, however, the Dutch had used this term to categorise their Portuguese subjects and certain native inhabitants of the sea coast towns, though their privileges as Burghers were nil (at first it was felt as a stigma, but later this irksome feeling had been removed, and gradually the 'Burghers' openly and invariably regarded themselves as forming a distinct community). Contemporary documents reveal the loose sense with which the term is being used. Bertolacci for instance divided the Burghers into no less than 6 categories. Even the offsprings between Ceylonese Christians and Indians, as well as the descendents of slaves who had been with the Dutch, were designated as Burghers, though apparently there was no valid reason for doing so.

In the strict sense of the term, the Burghers are the descendents in the male line of European Settlers who were under the Dutch East Indian Company in Ceylon. Any Ceylonese of mixed race and European descent cannot be correctly called a Burgher.

In abroad sense, the term Burgher refers to the descendents of the Europeans of unmixed blood or descendents of the Europeans who had connections with native Sinhalese and, to some extent, Tamil women. The two largest sub-grounds of Burghers today in Sri Lanka are known as the Dutch Burghers and the Portuguese Burghers, the former considering themselves socially superior to the latter.

The tendency of other mixed racial groups in Ceylon to label themselves as Burghers and the wishes of the Burghers to be identified as a distinct community with a historic role in the process of nation building of Ceylon, led to the formation of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon in the early 2Oth century. Its membership was confined to "Dutch descendents of full age and respectable standing in the community", *the term Dutch descendent being taken to include the descendents in the male lineage of European nationality* who were in the service of or under the rule of the Dutch East Indian Company in Ceylon, and the children of such descendents in the female line by marriage with Europeans. Applicants' claim for eligibility for membership was meticulosly scrutinized by a Genealogical Committee.

The architects of the Dutch Burghers Union clarified that they did so "without the slightest degree reflecting upon the character or respectability of other classes or individuals who were commonly included under the general denomination of Burghers...."[4]

Provision for conditions restricting the membership invited the charge of "racial snobbery and communal exclusiveness"[5] against the union by Burghers outside it and others. The Union vehemently pursued its goals for several years to "promote the moral, intellectual and social well-being" of the Burgher community. Unlike the Dutch Burgher Union with its most stringent and restrictive criteria for membership, *other Burgher Clubs*, particularly the sporting clubs were more liberal in reconciling to the fact that all those who are commonly referred to as Burghers are eligible for membership.

Regardless of the categorisation of the Burgher community the fact remains that though belonging to Western European ancestry, they are all Ceylonese citizens. Nevertheless, their mother-tongue has been English for

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4. J. R. Toussiant, quoted by Hiliare Jansz "A future for the Burghers" in Ceylon today (Colombo), Vol. No. 7 July, 1958, p. 15.

5. Ibid.

several generations and their cultural interests and ways of life are western. Table 3.I makes the point abundantly clear.

Table-3.1

Percentage of English Literates (Five years of age and above)

		Males			Females		
	Group	1901	1911	1921	1901	1911	1921
1.	Burghers and Europeans	65.7	77.7	88.2	61.6	74.1	81.4
2.	Low Country Sinhalese	03.4	04.1	5.2	0.9	1.2	2.0
3.	Kandyan Sinhalese	00.5	0.8	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
4.	Ceylon Tamils	Not Available	5.7	8.2	N.A.	1.3	2.1
5.	Ceylon Moors	N.A.	2.0	3.2	N.A.	0.1	9.3

Note : The totals do not add up to 100, as the data in respect of other groups has not been taken into account.

Source: Tambiah, S.J., Ethnic Representation in Ceylon's higher Administrative Service : 1870-1946 in the University of Ceylon Review, Colombo (April-July,1955) Ceylon Univesity Press, pp.113-134.

Sub-Groups and Their Life Style.

Between the two major sub-groups the Dutch Burghers and the Portuguese Burghers, the former consider themselves superior to the latter. A layman may not notice a marked distinction which is, however, quite obvious to the respective members of the two sub-groups of the community. The Dutch Burghers, are more advanced and prosperous than their Portuguese counterparts and maintain their exclusive identity through certain segregative practices. The social differences are buttressed by religious differences. Even as both are Christians, the Dutch Burghers belong to the Dutch Reform Church (i.e. Dutch Protestiantism) whilst the Portuguese Burghers are wholly Roman Catholics. Some of the Portuguese Burghers still speak Patois[6] based on Portuguese and

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6. A type of local dialect especially one that is used by the rustic or the iltiterate.

until a generation ago, were able to attend church services in Portuguese. Most of the Portuguese Burghers speak Sinhalese and those in Jaffna, speak Tamil as the majority of people in Jaffna are of South Indian Tamil origin.

The mother tongue of the Dutch Burghers is Sinhalese presently, though a few of them are quite nostalgic about Dutch being the mother-tongue of their forefathers. A few have more than a working knowledge of colloquial Sinhalese or Tamil. In fact, the younger generaton is keen to join the mainstream by learning Sinhalese.

The Portuguese Burghers had lost, with the defect of their Portuguese patrons, their privileged position and, consequently, came to lose, with the passage of time, their European character. Now they are indistinguishable from the mass of the indigenous people except in observance of different faiths. Of course, they do claim the privileges which accrued to the Europeans. With this predilection of European attire and since "pretensions" do not reflect "realities" they proved to be an object of derision in the eyes of the Englishmen and the conventional Sinhalese.

While the Dutch Burghers themselves have been influenced by the indigenous cultural milieu—especialy in respect of dress and food, the affinities between them and the Europeans were more genuinely perceived. Since the Dutch Burghers were the progeny of 'Pure' Dutch, there were Dutch marriages or marriages were contracted between them and Eurasian women. During the Dutch Rule, the Dutch Governor, in 1655, instructed that "those who now marry native women, for want of Dutch damsels, and educate their own children well" may have their daughters married to Netherlanders in future. Thus, the race may degenerate as little as possible. However, so keen were the Dutch to prevent their race from degenerating further that in 1678 the Dutch Governor proclaimed that "marriage with native women is forbidden because there are sufficient women descended from European fathers".

It should be emphasised that no such stringent restrictions on matrimonial alliances ever existed for the Portuguese. Thus, the Portuguese enjoyed greater freedom in matrimony with native women, so much so that today most of them who claim European ancestry have almost lost their European characteristics.

Because of this and because of Governmental patronages the Dutch Burghers ascended the social ladder.

The Portuguese Burghers were in no way able to match the achievements of their Dutch counterparts. In fact, their position, both economically and status wise deteriorated considerably.

The maintenance of the Dutch Burgher as a group of social standing stems from the fortunate circumstances in which they were able to transfer their allegiance from the Dutch to the British. Unlike the transition from the Portuguese to the Dutch, the change over from the Dutch to British rule was smooth and accomplished with great finesse and understanding. Soon an amicable relationship was established between the Dutch Burghers and their new rulers. Naturally, faced with the process of levelling down because of being removed away from the power centre, the assimilations of the Portuguese Burghers with the native people is more complete and substantial than that of the Dutch Burghers. They are reconciled to their commoners status. The Dutch Burghers are still far from reconciled with the loss of privileged positions. The changed scenario is something alien to them. They accelerated their search for greener pastures abroad after independence. It is only recently that the younger generation is reconciling with the changed situation and striving at joining the mainstream by picking up local languages and culture.

4
Social Integration

The coming together of two or more societies and sub-societies forms a web of relationships, which can be taken as neighbours, co-workers, buyers and sellers or even as conjugals. An interest is developed in each other and this sharing is made possible by a will to come together. Such a will itself is the result of an acceptance of the need of other people's help and co-operation. After all, society is an arrangement for the division of labour[1] Such an arrangement involves multiple interaction, exchange, and relations. The greater the involvement, the greater is the realization of inter-dependence which brings into play emotions in social relations.

Truly, there is a limit to the interdependent system of roles and division of labour. Beyond that lies a similar society in a similar sense which is separated by what Deutsch calls, 'relative discontinuities'. Between the two societies there are inter-communications. But they are relatively scant and involve a lesser volume of fewer kinds[2] When inter-connections increase, they may come to form a great society. This does not imply submergence, but only interdependence which is growing[3]. This social integration can be understood in

1. Ralph Linton, makes out the point when he says 'A society refers to a group of people who have learned to work together'. See *The Science of man in the world crisis* (Colombia University Press, 1945), page 79. This is to accept basically the position of Durkheim. See for details Emile Durkheim *'The Division of Labour in Society'* (New York, the Free Press, 1947).

2. Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1963), p.36.

3. Deutsch has perceptive observation to make on this score. Several of these societies may be linked among each other by a higher degree of the division of labour than they are with other societies elsewhere. One can, therefore, be at one and the same time member of more than one society. In the sense that the several societies may be separated from each other by some discontinuities and yet form together one civilization, a great society.....' *Ibid.*, 36-37.

terms of growing interdependence of the people on one another and consequently their concern for an interest in one another. The concept of social integration includes both integrative and relational aspects. The former is understood in the sense that there is exchange and utilization of services and goods. The latter, on the other hand, implies a well defined system of status accorded to actors of different categories and the will to live and work together among members. Against this theoretical perspective, the pattern of social integration of the Burghers is being discussed in this chapter. We shall try to enquire how far the Burghers have what the psycho-analysts would call 'cathectic orientation' towards objects[4]. The problem here is one of adjustment of attaining appropriate gratificatory relations to the objects[5] vis-a-vis both members of their own community and those of larger Sri Lankan society of which they are a part. In cathectic orientation towards the environment, what is important is the approach that an individual may also think of modifying himself, or he may like the object itself to be modified. In what way, ultimately 'gratification-deprivation' balance is maintained, is the crux of the problem. In this context, our concern here is to study, not the whole process involved in this orientation but the gratification-deprivation balance which is reflected in the attitude one ultimately forms in regard to the given objects.

Reminiscences of Past

The Burghers are predominantly an urban population inhabiting mostly Colombo, Kandy and Batticaloa. In the 19th century they occupied a highly important posititon in the socio-economic life of the island. They are largely Christians. They have adopted English as their mother tongue and prefer this language for medium of instruction. This is evident from the table 4.1 giving details of English speaking population by different communities in early 20th century. One notes the high rate of English speaking population both among men and women folk of the Burghers. Other communities are just beginners in this respect. Their attire, cultural interest and ways of living are western and generally considered too westernised in a resurgent nationalist Sri Lanka. The Burghers are especially proud of their ancestory, respect and consider themselves superior to other communities in the country, including the Sinhalese and Tamil population. They are generally peaceful and law-abiding

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4. The term 'cathectic orientation', "means the significance of ego's relations to the object or objects in question for the gratification deprivation balance of his personality." Talcott Parsons, The Social System (New Delhi, Anienrind, 197Z), p. 7.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

citizens, possess strong home-loving tendencies and affection for the kindred. Violence is virtually unknown among the Burghers, as a social group, though they may give vent to pent-up feelings through foul words expressed in Portuguese patois and some times in annonymous letters. They love to sip alcoholic beverages moderately. The Burghers take real pride in reading western novels. Many old Dutch customs intermixed with Sinhalese practices were in vogue amongst them.

As mentioned earlier, the Burghers belong to urban areas, but if a question were to be put to them as to how do they like the city or town they live in ? the older members would reply that it's not so good as it was earlier, say in the British period or just after the British left, while the younger generation would respond that they really can not say, because they have no idea of life in the city or town during the pre-independence days. The middle aged group would likewise state that they come across advantages as well as disadvantages, that is to say, partly good and a bit bad. The reason for this response pattern will be the fact that after the British left the island, the Burghers still retained their jobs which were highly paid, and occupied quarters which were spacious and in good localities. A decade after independence the Burghers started loosing out on the jobs, on which they once had a stronghold. This led not only to their economic downfall but also their social degeneration.

The Burghers feel that Sri Lanka itself is difficult for them to live in because they have to face economic competition from the majority and other minority groups in the island. As a result they have neither been able to better their economic status, nor have they been socially accepted by the higher caste, as on par with them. That is why they feel that the situation is going from bad to worse for them.

This feeling emerges basically from all age groups but more from the older generation. It is human nature that one always tends to compare the past and present conditions both economically and socially. In doing so the past often appears to have provided better amenities. In the case of the younger generation it is not so, because they have not passed through both the phases; they are only aware of the present situation around them.

Another aspect which augurs well for the prospects of national integration in their country is that though the burghers are a microscopic minority, they do tend to have westernized ways and habits and they have greater affinity with the Burghers all over Sri Lanka than with those residing exclusively in their own town or city. This may either be due to the small number of the Burgher community in towns and cities of Sri Lanka or their

broader outlook. At the same time the pattern of psychic identification indicated here is helpful to the cause of national integration, because the younger age group which is considered more challengesome to the system, is less nostalgic about a hoary past and appears more reconciled to the present scene than the older generation which has a passing importance both in terms of phasing out or migrating to other countries.

Table-4.1

Percentage of English Literates
(5 Years of Age and above)

Groups		Males			Females		
		1901	1911	1921	1901	1911	1921
1.	Burghers & Eurasians	65.7	77.7	82.2	61.6	74.1	81.4
2.	Low Country Sinhalese	03.4	04.1	05.2	00.9	01.2	02.0
3.	Kandyan Sinhalese	00.5	00.8	01.2	0.1	0.2	0.3
4.	Celon Tamils	Not Available	05.7	08.2	N.A.	01.3	02.1
5.	Ceylon Moors	N.A.	02.0	03.2	N.A.	00.1	00.3

Note : The totals do not add up to 100, as the data in respect of other groups has not been taken into account.

Source : Tambiah, S.J., "Ethnic representation in Ceylon's higher Administrative Service : 1870-1946" in the *University of Ceylon Review*, Colombo (April-July, 1975), Ceylon University, Press, pp. 113-134.

We now turn to find out whether the Burghers get an opportunity to come in contact with other social groups and also whether they utilize these opportunities to develop social relations with the non-Burghers. It is observed that most of the Burghers would regard neighbourhood as the place of social interaction. It is also obvious that they live in areas which are mostly inhabited by non-Burghers. Besides the normal daily exchanges in the neighbourhood, social functions and ceremonies provide opportunities for social interaction with the neighbours. However, coming in contact with other social groups is one thing and developing a common or secular identity in terms of inter-community bridges is another. The Burghers are inclined to be friendlier with non-Burghers

now. The position is not merely of an acquaintence but it is now converted to friendship. This only goes to show that the pattern of friendship cuts across caste and religion. The members of the community are friendly because they get on well. This point has been specifically highlighted, because prior to independence, the Burghers stayed within their own community circle, so much so that the Dutch Burghers did not associate themselves even with the Portuguese Burghers as they considered them socially inferior and below their dignity to mix with.

There are certain factors accounting for the changing scenario. Particularly, one may refer to the twin processes of levelling up and levelling down. The Sinhalese, the majority community taking advantage of their power position, are fast catching up with the Burghers, the early modernizers. On the other hand, the Burghers have had to lose certain politico-economic privileges and status after the imperial power withdrew from the scene.

Behaviour of other Social Groups

The development of social relations which assist the process of social integration depends to a considerable extent upon the other party as well. When both the parties want to have relations, social relations grow easily. But an essential pre-requisite of such a will is that the pattern of behaviour of each party is at least tolerated, if not appreciated by the other party. Further, the two parties entering into relations should be prepared to accord to each other a respectable social status. If these two pre-requisites are missing, evolution of harmonious social relations would become a difficult task.

Bridging the distances between two or more communities are helped if, apart from the occasions of social get-together, the members of different communities feel alike or have standards of uniformity in respect of dress, dietry habits and other cultural traits. We tried to ascertain information in these respects as well. As mentioned earlier, a questionnaire could not be administered to the members of this community due to emergency proclaimation in Sri Lanka. But whatever information I could gather from persons who visited the island as late as 1982 and a few friends who had come from the recently and the literature available, some specific observations can be made here. It appears that there is no distinguishing mark between the Burghers and other communities so far their dress is concerned. Among women, one dress is common that is the saree. The casual wear is jeans or a dress. This is also commonly worn by most of the westernized and modernized young ladies,

irrespective of class or caste[6]. Here a comparison in contrast can be made with the Eurasians of Pakistan and India who generally wear dresses like skirts and blouses or jeans, or in a word western attire. They are easily distinguishable from the majority communities of their respective countries. Therefore, on the account of dress the Burghers have no cause to complain that they are harassed either by the public or students. The same is true of their kitchen and dietry patterns.

So this community cannot have grounds for complaint in this respect. But they have complaints against some communities in certain specific areas. Among these are complaints against the Moor traders whom they feel charge a high rate of interest whenever they need to take a loan from them. But then this is not only in their case. Rather in general whoever takes a loan from a private individual has definitely to pay a higher rate of interest to the money lender. The latter assesses the need and the time factor. Therefore, this complaint cannot be attributed to be specific to this one particular community.

A very valid cause of complaint that the elderly Burghers have, is that most of them feel bad at the shabby treatment meted out to them in public offices where they work. They feel that they are not accorded the treatment or at least feel that they do not get that sort of recognition as other members of the majority community get. Some of them continue to work as they are faced with economic pressures, while others continue because they feel that at this age they have no prospects of a better alternative profession than what they have in hand. The younger generation do not need to complain on that score, but do have a grudge that after 1956 with the passing of the 'Sinhalese only Act' they have to face greater and rather unfair competition. That is, most of them have to learn Sinhala if they want to compete with the mainstream of Sri Lanka. The Tamils perhaps could have a common cause of complaint with the Burghers in this regard. They too feel that by imposing the use of Sinhalese language as a must for governmental jobs, most of them, apart from speaking Tamil, are expected to have a working and speaking knowledge of the Sinhalese. This has definitely put them in a position of second class citizens in their homeland. The Tamils can vent their grievances openly, per virtue of their sizeable strength on the island. But the Burghers are definitely in a weaker position not only because of

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6. In Sri Lanka there is no water-tight distinction of dress as there is in Pakistan where Muslim women will never wear westernized dresses once they are grown up, or in India too where Hindu women will not be seen in a western attire after the girls are grown up. In India one can even distinguish between Hindu and Muslim women.

their numerical strength being much less, but more so because of their political inarticulation.[7]

If we take up the older and younger generation's grievances, we find that the older members suffer from a sense of nervousness, of a feeling of being looked down upon by the majority community. In the case of the younger generation it is more of mentally conditioning themselves to the changed scenario. Apart from their mother tongue, they have got to know the island's national language. Every independent nation wants its citizens to know the national language along with their local dialect. Sri Lanka is no exception to this rule. Being fresh in ideas, it is easier for the younger generation to learn the national language which is different from their mother tongue, provided they decide to do so. If we want to make an impartial analysis, the older generation have also got to come to terms with circumstances and adapt to their place of work; while at the same time the majority community should see that a congenial atmosphere is created where minorities work. More care should be taken to create a healthy and workable environment.

In the case of the youth they should be first and foremost mentally conditioned from their homes, that they have to learn Sinhala if they want to better their socio-economic conditions and feel more integrated with the majority community, as well as with all citizens living in Sri Lanka. What encourages the hopes in this regard is the fact that there is a willingness on the part of the Burghers and other Sri Lankans to maintain friendly relations.

This should be treated and worked upon in earnest for the coming closer of the cultures of the two communities in the larger interest of national integration.

As a class the Burghers have a tendency towards "dressy display and ornamentation"[8] of the body. Regardless of their economic conditions, rich or poor, they try to maintain a high standard of living consistent with their past traditions and values. Their life style coupled with their low salaries drag them to chronic indebtedness to the Moor Traders, the main business community of the Island. In the past, during the imperial era this community, particularly those of Dutch origin, were financially much better off and enjoyed a high standard of living. After the British rule consolidated in Sri Lanka, the British felt the

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7. Their political behaviour, aims and attitudes will be discussed in the next chapter.

8. William Digby, "The Eurasian of Ceylon", *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 63. July 1876. pp. A3-206.

necessity to recruit persons to man the thousand and one inferior offices in the government administration and mercantile firms as well. Since the Burghers were English speaking, fairly educated with westernized way of living and possessed an aptitude for the proper performance of duties (they knew how taxes were collected, what dues were traditionally owed by the Sinhalese to the company and how law and order was administered), they were able to get closer to the British rulers, although they did find the rule itself causing a little downslide in their socio-political status. The British would not be as charitable as their Dutch counterparts for the reason of blood ties. Many Dutch Burghers fell from a position of 'opulence' to one of 'bare competitive' and were thrown into ultimate state of poverty-an inevitable sequel to the change of government. To save as much as possible the Burghers had to think of collaboration with the new regime.

However, the Burghers were provided an opportunity to man several posts mainly clerical in the service of government and mercantile firms. They also took up teaching, medical and legal professions often with outstanding success. With the expansion of the judicial system the Burghers entered the courts of lawyers and soon there was a preponderence of them there. By 1833 almost all the magesterial posts were held by the Burghers, much to the chagrin of the Ceylonese. Sir Alexander Johnston, an Englishman, earlier King's advocate, subsequently Chief Justice and President of Council, who was the champion and propounder of the Burghers, had wrought great things on their behalf. He petitioned to His Majesty's Government to treat the Burghers at par with other Europeans and used his personal influence to ensure a better place for them in the Judiciary and other government departments. The greatest ambition cherished by them was to enter the Government Service. In fact with this community, clerical services became a tradition. Even the ablest among them manifested a fascination and a preference for the Government Service. The attraction was not the salary, for as clerks they were miserably underpaid, but it was the pension secured after service as well as the sense of respectability it conferred. Consequently the "Volunteer Clerk" has been known to habitually scribble on whole sheets of foolscap his name followed by the abbreviation 'C.C.S.'[9] Others as advocates, among them, have risen to great fame, though not often to affluence. (Colonial Englishmen were much puzzled witnessing a Burgher of great attainments and leader of Supreme Court Bar relinquishing his high unofficial position to become the Queen's Deputy Advocate for the Island).

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9. C.C.S. stand for 'Ceylon Civil Service'.

Inspite of their low salaries in the C.C.S., high life and chronic indebtedness, the Burghers penchant for and performance in the government service had earned due respect and many compliments were paid to them. They were described "as back bone of the white Bureaucracy under the British rule". Sir Henry Ward, the then Governor of Ceylon 1855-1860, compared them to the "bronzen wheels of the government in motion". An English Civil Servant said, "I look upon the Civil Servants as being the best friends and proctors the natives have". In a sense they were more than what the Burgher element of national life denoted as the social force through which the natives were brought in closer contact with Europeans and have been taught to share the burden of the social and municipal life.

The Burghers displayed striking capacity for adaptation during the British time-the speed at which they acquired proficiency in English language and then adopted it as their mother tongue, and consequently were able to dominate and perform with distinction in the Government Service and other professions. This is at extreme with their limited horizon, in the sense that a few of them joined other social groups in the exploitation of opportunities in the country's economy.

With the dethronement of the English language by the Sinhala Act in 1956, a large number of the Burgher population found bleak the prospects of a career in Civil Service. They took to migrating to Australia, to seek better opportunities for pursuing a way of life consistent with their traditions. Although the number of emigrants has increased in recent years, they still represent a small but privileged portion of the entire community.

Concluding, one may say that the transfer of imperial power from the Dutch to the British brought about a change in the socio-economic status of the Burghers. This could, however, be termed a change more of degree than of kind, but the greatest blow that members of this community faced was with the declaration of independence in Sri Lanka when political power was transferred from the British to the Sinhalese. The Burghers who had all-along equipped themselves to work for their European masters, resented the rule of a group whom they considered socially inferior. Economically too they were losing government jobs in favour of the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Their proportionate share in recruitment in public sector services has also considerably declined. For example, in 1976, as Table 4.2 brings out, only 0.3% of male and 0.2% of female from among the Burghers community got into the public sector employment. Certainly in terms of their share in total populatian of the country it may not be called an under proportionate share. But considering that they have been the first and most well placed community so far as knowledge of English or benefits of

higher education are considered, it is. The achievements of the Sinhalese, starting from scratch and only slowly picking up, are quite laudable. So the Burghers, with European blood in their veins, thought the best way to maintain their socio-economic status was by migrating to Western countries, rather than staying at home and facing 'ridicule' of the local population.

Table 4.2

New Entrants in the Public Sector, 1976*

Race	Percentage	
	Male	*Female*
1. Sinhalese	82.9	87 8
2. Tamils	11.9	8.7
3. Moors and Malays	4.9	3 3
4. Burghers	0.3	0.2
5. Others	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Source : Department of Census and Statistics. Sri Lanka, Colombo (*Unpublished*).

Table4.3

Directors of Rupee Companies by Caste and Race, 1971

Sinhalese:	Goyigama	76
	Karva	67
	Salagama	10
	Durava	02
Burgher		22
Moor		08
Parsee		02
Borah		14
European		88
Tamil		54
No information		35
Total		378

Quoted in Hand Book of Rupee Companies, 1971 (Colombo, Colombo Brokers' Association, 1971).
Source: Reproduced from JANICE JIGGINS Caste and Family in the Politics of the Sinhalese 1947-1976, p. 26, (Colombo K.V.G. de. Silva & Sons).

Of course, their's is not a totally lost case. Considering their high socio-political status and proximity to the seat of power in the imperial days, a good number of Burghers continue to occupy high offices in many sectors. As an illustrative case, one may refer to their share among the total number of Directors of the Rupee Companies (1971) as given in table 4.3. Of 378 total such directors, their number was 22 (5.8%) which is not bad considering their feeble population strength (only 0.3%).

A similar trend is discerinible if we examine the data regarding share of different communities in the recruitment to foreign service. This has been done in tables 4.4 and 4.5 respectively for the periods 1949-53 and 1960-64. Apparently, against a population strength of 0.3% in the total, the Burghers had 4 of 44 (9.7%) jobs in foreign service coming to members from their own ranks. In the later phase, viz. 1960-64, their share with and out of 10 (20%) was higher. This is all because of their being better placed in society. For the rest the tables speak for themselves.

Table-4.4

Patterns of Recruitment In the Foreign Service (1948-64)

Ethnic Group	No. of Recruits	% of Recruit	% of Pop.
Sinhalese	25	56.9	71.9
Tamil	14	31.8	11.1
Muslim	1	2.3	7.1
Burgher	4	9.1	0.3

B. Total Recruitments 1948-64

Denominational Group			
Buddhist	13	29.5	67.4
Hindu	10	22.7	17.6
Islam	1	2.2	7 1
Christian	20	45.9	7.7

Source: H.S.S. NISSANKA-*Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy : A Study in Non-Alignment* Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1984, pp. 112-113.

Table-4.5

Patterns of Recruitments In the Foreign Service (1960-64)

Ethnic Group	No. of Recruits	% of Recruitment
Sinhalese	6	60
Tamil	2	20
Muslim	0	0
Burgher	2	20

Source: H.S.S. NISSANKA-*Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy: A Study in Non-Alignment,* Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1984. pp. 112-113.

An Overview

On the whole it emerges that the Burghers are still nostalgic about their golden past that is before Independence. Post Independence changes, leading to Sinhalization of politico-administrative processes have come as a bit of shock to them. Not reconciled to their marginalization they prefer migration to other countries for brighter prospects both from monetary perspectives and from western life style perspectives. They are unwilling to accept Sinhalese hegenomy or Sinhali culture.

But among those left behind, particularly the younger generation is all prepared to take Sinhalization in its stride and thereby join the mainstream. Understandably, this group of the Burghers are developing friendly relations with a number of non-Burghers and show a keen desire to widen their circle of friends from among members of other communities. At times misunderstanding or unpleasant behaviour from certain social groups handicap this process. If better understanding and increased communication between the two communities can be assured the problem would also be removed. The encouraging trend in this regard is that there is willingness on the part of the Burghers and other Sri Lankan communities to maintain friendly relations.

This should be treated and worked upon in earnest for the coming closer of the cultures of the two communities in the larger interest of national integration.

5
Politics of Integration :
The Low Profile

The newly independent countries of the third world have had to encounter the upsurge of minority nationalism in a big way. While this problem sends tremors and shock-waves occasionally in the developed polities also, it has not acquired the threatening postures there in a way it is doing so in the developing polities[1]. Minorities suspecting a second class citizen status in the new set up dominated by the majority community are found struggling for a just and honourable place to their satisfaction.

But it involves not merely a question of greater share in the national cake, which is, of course, defined to one's advantage and, thus, becomes a source of conflict. More than that, one comes across in the process attempts at differentiated political identities splitting and fragmenting the soldiarities of the national movement in more permanent and deeper ways. The minorities, particulary those politically more articulate and active, made a common cause with the majority community in throwing away the yoke of imperialism. The currents of independence, however, set them apart from the majority community. The very symbols of national unity, and strategies of nation building as adopted by the new ruling elites are often irritating to the minorities and found suppressive of their community interests. At times the problem of competing for a share in politico-economic privileges, is carried to the level of a struggle for survival and produce conditions of civil war. The minorities are worked up to reject the definition and parameters of nation-building as set out by the ruling group often from the majority community.

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1. For a comprehensive survey of difference in the nationality problem in the Euro-American and Afro-Asian societies, one may refer to : K. Minogue, *Nationalism*, London, 1967, and R.L. Merritt and S. Rokkan, *Comparing Nations*, New Haven, 1966.

Thus, one finds that in the developing world, the socio-ethinc divisions have been carried out or translated in political divisions. This is in contrast to the Euro-American Political system wherein, exceptions apart, they have been bypassed by a more secular reordering of group loyalties for purposes of political activity. As distinctive personalities are projected in politics and new planks and platforms are sought, a whole-hog attempt is made to define the identies in terms of differentiated political history and ideology. Assertion of primordial sentiments and social divisions on political arena make it difficult to have a working consensus on the basic framework and norms of politics. This lies at the root of the instability of political system and even of the nation state system[2].

Differentiated Political Identities In Sri Lanka

In some countries the ruling elite showing greater understanding get prepared for renegotiated national identity and its symbols. But in others, politico-ideological frameworks and postures are more rigidly observed, giving way to more militant conflict[3]. In the latter cases, one of course finds not all the minorities involved in the pitched battles over nationality and other issues. While some minorities are in conflict others are lying low and still some others find it convenient to build bridges with the majority community.

It is interesting to enquire how and why different minorities tend to maintain differentiated response to the issues and problems of nationalism and nation-building in the specific settings.

Sri Lanka falls in the latter cases where attemps at negotiated and renegotiated identity are exhausted. The process of Sinhalization emanating from the 'Sinhala only' slogan (expressed through a legislative enactment in 1956) has given rise to schism between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, the largest minority, so much so that the very integrity of Sri Lanka is threatened following the three decades of political animosities between them. The Tamil secessionist

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2. Contributions of Mckin Marriott and Clifford Geertz in Clifford Geertz (ed) *Old Societies and New States* (Free Press Glencoe, 1963) provide interesting insight in this regard. See also various contributions in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp (ed.) *Political Identity in South Asia* for a discussion of relevant trends.
3. See : Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London : Duckworth, 1985, particularly chapters 8 and 9.

movement has acquired great militancy and engaged the Sinhalese army in pitched battles[4].

A diagnostic analysis of the hostile relations between the two communities bring out a complex set of factors contributing to the deteriorating of their mutual relations. While this is no place of undertaking a detailed analysis of them, one may suggest from a review of certain studies that the language issue is a great divide as compared to religion because it directly impinges on the material interests of the people. This is to be clearly borne in mind as one notes that religious and linguistic and geographical divisions coincide in Sri Lanka[5]. Language becomes a matter of greater concern because it is directly related with the entry in the civil service and in the industries. As Sinhala replaces English both in the Universities and in the offices. the Tamils feel highly disadvantaged particularly because they were the first to take advantage of modern education through English.

Patterns of development of two competitive nationalistic ideologies are quite complex and partly reactive also. In course of development, their strong and weak points are also obvious. The trends in this regard are well summed up by Urmila Phadnis. Discussing the identity problem of major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka she observed that :

"The ethnic nationalism of the Sinhalese had its resonance amongst the Ceylon Tamils, whose minority complex was aggravated by the circumstance of their being a socially mobilized community with a distinct regional and linguistic identity. For historical reasons, the substitution of Sinhala for English as the official language was perceived as inimical to the community interests........

Language, thus, assumed centrality in Sinhalese-Tamil Politics presumably because it was an effective symbol of tradition for assertion of group distinctiveness as it was a harbinger for Socio-economic benefits in modern times."[6]

4.   Newspaper coverage is quite comprehensive in this regard and, therefore, one may avoid detailed accounts of it. But for a systematic analysis of the present civil war conditions in Sri Lanka one may refer to : Newton Guna Singhe, "The open economy, Sinhala business and ethnic conflict - , *Lanka Guardian*, Vol. 6, No. 18, Jan. 15, 1984, p. 15-17 and Vol 6, No. 19, Feb. 1, 1984, p. 10-12.

5.   See : *Supra*, Chapter 2.

6.   Urmila Phadnis, "Ethnic Groups in the Politics of Sri Lanka" in Taylor and Yapp (ed.). No. 2, pp. 205-206.

Phadnis also discusses how the Tamil movement for regional autonomy as to protect minority interests gradually grew into a secessionist movement, particularly under the pressure of the Tamil youth.[7]

Today, of course, the situation has gone beyond the negotiating stage and reached a point of no return for the two communities. It is either a complete secession of Tamil north or abject surrender and liquidation of the militant Tamil wings that can ensure peace for Sri Lanka. Thus, the **present plight** of Sri Lanka is directly attributable to what Mckim Marriott envisaged much earlier, "the cultural policies of Ceylon (which) fell far short of comprehending the whole nation."[8]

Small Minorities And Nationality Problem

Surprisingly, other minorities are not found much bothered to take sides or, better to say feel so agitated over the nationality issue. On the face of it, they do not feel disturbed over the mononationalitism of the majority community elite in power. There is no express reaction to the policies of Sinhalization. This is true of the Muslims most of whom are Arab Moors, Christians, including Burghers and surprisingly even the Indian Tamils who were at one stage threatened of deportation to parent country by the Sinhalese elite.

Either that the politico-cultural policies of the new elite have scope for exceptions, they being the beneficiary, or that they are reconciled to their being absorbed and integrated with the Sinhalese nationalism. From trends discussed in several studies of Sri Lanka it is apparent that a host of factors have combined to their mute response or general indifference to the hotting up scene in the island. First, the Muslims and Christians of Sri Lanka are not as fanatic and dogmatic as they are in other parts of Asia or even as in the neighbouring regions. They are highly inspired by achievement orientation, no matter if it involves some cultural compromises. Secondly, while most of them are Tamil speakers, class and caste distinctions plus clash of economic interests keep them apart from the Ceylon Tamils who are carrying on a relentless secessionist movement. Thirdly, the dominant elite is prepared to grant certain concessions on the fringe, so that they feel satisfied and not lend support to the secessionist movement. The Muslims and Indian Tamils have even found a berth in the present UNP government.

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7. *Ibid*, pp. 201-205.

8. Mckim Marriott, "Cultural Policy in the New States", in C. Geertz (ed.), No. 2, p. 43.

Burghers And The Nationality Issue:
The Strange Response

A surface view will bring out that the response of the Burghers to the entangled problem of nationality is quite akin to that of other small minorities. They are also not expressedly agitated over the entangled problem of mono-nationalism of the ruling elite. But a deeper view will suggest that the causes in their case are different even if the response is the same.

On the whole, it appears that the Burghers have taken to neither a collaborative, nor confrontationist approach *vis-a vis* the nationalism and nation-building strategies as adopted by the Sinhala elite. In fact, they are not actively seeking to articulate and assert their political identity even as to pursue their legitimate political interests as a minority community. This is somewhat unusual of them when compared to other minorities including the smaller ones; while maintaining their neutrality over Sinhala-Tamil conflict, they do appear to be building their political identity. Apart from socio-cultural programmes to strengthen their group identities, they do involve in group bargaining on the eve of elections and show direct concern with the governmental measures affecting the interests of the community.[9]

As for the Burghers it is a case of total retreat even in face of threats to their interests both at the level of community and the individual. Even if seeking to avoid confrontation with the ruling elite, as some of them confessed in course of personal interview,[10] for reasons of small size, one normally expects them to articulate and assert group-identity at political level so as to protect and, promote community interests. As the concept of welfare state increasingly guides the state affairs, every Community is entitled to make legitimate demands on the state. The Burghers have all the more reasons to do so even without assuming aggressive postures in this regard. One can list the reasons, briefly, as follows :

(a)   Burghers are one of the most modernized and resourceful communities both in terms of education and material achievements.

(b)   Historically speaking, they have been actively associated with the governmental processes in substantial ways.

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9.   See for details, Vasundhara Mohan, *Muslims of Sri Lanka*, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1985.

10. Based on the information gathered by some colleagues who happened to be in Sri Lanka on academic assignment.

(c)   Certain governmental policies have posed a threat to other community interests in a significant way. This includes enactment of 'Sinhala Only' act, nationalization of private schools, curbs on Christian missionaries and so on. Being Christians and an English speaking community, all these measures directly affected them by placing limits on the job and other opportunities traditionally available to them[11].

(d)   Even if a small minority, political activities of the Burghers would have matured a lot at this crucial juncture because of the politically hot climate of Sri Lanka since independence in 1948. Even a marginal support can at times tilt the balance.

But instead of building a new or strengthening the old identity, the Burghers are just on the retreat. At cultural level, they are somewhat active, but not at all at the political level. If at all they are responding, they are doing so by retreating and migrating to other countries. Reasons accounting for the retreating strategy have been discussed in a previous chapter. The outflow of population is so high that as many as 80% of the Burghers have migrated to other countries in search of greener pastures. Those left behind are prepared to join the political mainstream as defined by the majority elite.

In this chapter we undertake a detailed analysis of various aspects of political behaviour of the Burghers against the general perspective outlined above. It is proposed to discuss the trends in political behaviour in the context of dominant Sinhala nationalism which has monistic trends. Specifically, we seek to focus on their attitude towards politics and use of politics for furthering legitimate group interests, levels of political participation both at community and at individual level, the impact of state policies on their interests, their evaluation of state policies and patterns and strategies of response to politico-governmental processes.

For obvious reasons the discussion can be divided into two phases : pre-independence and post-independence. The first phase stands out for their special status and privileged position. They have been the progeny of the European masters, the empire-builder. But more than that they were the first and foremost to pick up first Dutch and then English, the official languages respectively in the Dutch and the British period. This enabled them to occupy a pre-eminent position in the bureaucracy and in other professions. For the same,

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11. The relevant account in this regard is available in E.F.C. Ludowyk, *The Story of Ceylon*, *London*. Faber and Faber, 1962, p. 291.

they could also afford an aristocratic living immitating their imperial masters, even if it distanced them from other, large but backward, communities[12]. But in the second phase, independence can be said to bestow on them more of unhappy experiences. Gone with the imperial powers was the use of English as the official language. That resulted in pre-eminence of a native language and native elite, resulting in loss of political privileges and economic opportunities for the Burghers.

The foregoing discussion is proposed to be undertaken against an overall survey of politico-constitutional developments in both the phases impinging on the interests of and prospects for the Burgher community.

Politico-Constitutional Development:
Pre-Independence Phase

A survey of politico-constitutional developments in the overall frame of modernization of a traditional order aims to focus on the moves towards democratization of a traditional polity. Herein one may see how the principles of responsible government, rule by consent and rule of law and system of representation came to be accepted in a substantial form whether evolved or adopted.

The initiation of significant politico-constitutional developments on the horizon of the island can be traced back to the early part of 19th century when the British acquired significant foothold there.

Before that the Dutch also initiated some reforms. But they have been interested more in trade and commerce rather than in providing a system of governance to the island.

The British were in possession of the areas of Ceylon in 1796. Their intents and design appears to be the same, but the fresh social and political situation which make up history trace new patterns. First and most important, the British were much more than the emergent paramount power in South India. They were not just an Indian power. Their might in India was only part of a growing world empire.

In the first twenty five years of British rule in Ceylon, no great changes were initiated by the new rulers. But once the island became a colony of the crown in 1802, even though they were still subject to the control of the company

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12. *Supra.* Chapter III.

and its court of Directors, a significant principle of change had been introduced. The Governor of Ceylon appointed by the crown would naturally have his responsibility to the country he was administering. The first four Governors of Sri Lanka were ambitious persons with definite notions and principles of how they wished to rule, they were, however, not free agents. There were multifarious authorities to be consulted, to be referred to and to be placated. That included authorities on the spot in Ceylon, in India and at home in England, viz. the military, the Madras Government, the Governor General in India, the Ceylon Agent in London, the war office and finally the parliament. Still the Governor of Ceylon could, even for the brief interval between despatch and the reply to it, be an autocrat. As a man on the spot it was he who ultimately decided and acted.

The early thirties of the last century were a turning point in Ceylon's history. They marked the beginnings of two essentials, though often conflicting features of the colonial rule. The first concerns the imperial colonising power. Economic benefits were to be gained by investing capital in a colonial territory and thereby developing it as a system which goes by the name of 'economic exploitation'[13]. To the exploited colonies it brought both good and ill effects. The second feature of colonial rule which emanates from the political and cultural ideas of colonial powers, is bound to filter through to the people of the colonies as part of deliberate design or otherwise. It made possible for Britain to develop parliamentary democracy, on the basis of an extending and finally granting universal franchise. The medium of filteration was the western educated young men who received part or all of their education in Britain and in the schools and colleges of the colonial country on British lines. English language was the medium of instruction.

The first landmark in the history of constitutional development came initially in 1833 as a result of the Colebrooke-Cameron Report of 1832. In 1829, a commissioner came to Ceylon. He was Major William Colebrooke, a regular soldier, of a somewhat usual type. He was joined by a legal colleague, Charles Cameron, whose assignment was to look into the administration of justice in the island. Colebrooke spent two years in Ceylon, and Cameron a year. They

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13. In Ceylon the plantation economy came to be developed through the growth of coffee planting, with its ancillaries of import and export and of banking firms. The work of carting the coffee and other commodities necessary on the estates, were mainly carried on by low country Sinhalese, who were accustomed to work for the Europeans, and to live under a money economy. It was after the middle thirties that coffee planting became financially attractive.

presented their reports in 1832, four by Colebrooke respectively on the administration of the Government, Revenue, compulsory services and establishment, and one by Cameron on the Judicial establishment.

Constitutionally, the important recommendations included association of peoples representatives with Government, representations to various groups on communal basis and placing limits on the autocratic powers of the Governor; thus departing from the policy of Dundas as set out in 1802, in his instructions to Governor North. This was to be done by recognizing the institution of executive and legislative councils and by removing the Governor's powers of imprisoning and banishing without trial. His Judicial powers were also to be removed. The final decision which set the constitutional pattern through out the nineteenth century and later, stipulated that the Governor should not be excluded from proceedings of the legislative council, as Colebrooke had recommended. He continued to preside over the deliberations of that body until 1924 in practice and 1931 in theory.

The legislative council was to have majority of the officials. But provision was made for non-official members nominated after due consideration to various communities of the island. With a strength of 15 members, 9 were to be officials including the Chief Justice,[14] the Commander of the Land forces, the Colonial Secretary, the Auditor General, the Colonial Treasurer, the Government agent for the Western Province, the Surveyor-General and the Collector of Customs at Colombo. The other 6 were to be selected from the chief landed proprietors and the principal merchants of the island.

The first 6 non-official members would include 3 Europeans, 1 Burgher, 1 Sinhalese and 1 Tamil. Obviously, the Burghers have been considered at par with other communities, notwithstanding their small size, because of high level of socio-educational attainments. The council was to have the power of the law making, subject to a somewhat limited veto by the Governor. Minutes were to be kept and sent to the Secretary of State half-yearly. All laws and business, however, could only be introduced on the initiative of the Government.

Another most important recommendation of Colebrooke was to do away with the separation of the Kandyan and Tamil territories from the rest of the island. Thus, Ceylon was unified under one administration. Cameron's report also made for unification. His aim was to make the administration of

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14.   In later years the Chief Justice was replaced by the Attorney General.

justice more efficient and free from any kind of discrimination between the Europeans and the local people and between the rich and the poor. All courts were brought directly under the charge of Supreme Court by allowing appeals to that Court.

One further recommendation made by Colebrooke had to do with education. For recruitment of the locals in the civil services, he came out strongly in favour of the use of the English language as the medium of instruction. In his own words the recommendation has been : "The education afforded by the native priesthood in their temples scarcely merits any notice. In the interior the Buddhist priests have evinced some jealousy of the Christian missionaries, but the people in general are desirous of instructions, in whatever way offered to them and are especially anxious to acquire the English language"[15].

For the next seventy seven years. there was no major reform in the set up. The history of constitutional affairs from 1833 to 1910 was mainly concerned with the relations between the Government and the business and planting interests as represented in the legislative council where, despite the official majority, they exerted great influence. Though constitutional development was meagre, it had its importance in the limitations placed on the executive power, and the influence exercised by the unofficial minority which included a few representatives of the local population.

Still, one notes that the people of Ceylon, as a whole, did not acquire much political consciousness. They accepted the existing order of things, and had real respect for their European masters. There was a small section, mostly of the rising middle classes, who were not content and who did not accept the existing order. This section grew as the mainspring of the movement for political independence.

In the fifties and sixties of the 19th century demands were made by the Europeans, supported by the Burghers, for an unofficial majority. In 1864 they formed an association, the Ceylon League, with this end in view. But this was steadily opposed by the Government in Ceylon and by the home government. The argument was that an unofficial majority would serve only the interests of

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15. Quoted from G.C. Mendis, The Colebrooke-Cameron papers, Oxford University Press, 1956.

the European planters and merchants and of the small community of Burghers, but not of the mass of the people.[16]

During the nineteenth century, the civil service was drawn almost exclusively from the people coming from the British Isles (the term 'European' generally used in Ceylon and even in India and Africa). The locals would occupy the posts only through promotion in a minor way.

The posts in the clerical cadre had always been filled by the local people mostly the Burghers in the early phase of British because they took little time in dropping the Dutch and adopting the English language. Later, members of the large communities, the Ceylon Tamil in particular, keenly sought these posts.

In the seventies of the 19th century, the general clerical services were reorganized. Enterance had to be gained through competitive examinations. The young educated Tamils filled the new posts in numbers altogether out of proportion to the percentage of their population. This provoked considerable jealousy on the part of the Sinhalese which would have political repurcussions later.

It was towards the turn of the century that the new and developing middle class began to feel its feet, and to start an agitation for some measures of political advance.

Consequently by 1923, the dominance of officials in the legislative council came to be replaced by a majority of elected members. But the inadequately defined relationship between the executive and legislative council often created a situation of political stalemate. This made a reform of the constitution imperative. The result was the Donoughmore Constitution. Enacted in 1931 it remained in force till September, 1947. The constitution contained a scheme to bridge the gap between crown colony and full responsible government, a scheme which sought to reconcile the problem of power with those of responsibility. That constitution included provisions in respect of the following significant matters :

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16. Sir Henry Ward, an able mid-century Governor, in a despatch wrote that, "In a colony, the population of which consists of seven or eight thousand Europeans, a small though intelligent class of Burghers, and two millions of Sinhalese, Tamils and Moormen...you can not introduce the principle of Representative or responsible Government... The Government must for many years hold the balance between European and native interests." Quoted by S.A. Pakeman in *Ceylon* Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1964, p. 85.

1. It provided for universal adult suffrage.
2. It abolished communal representation and provided for territorial representation.
3. It conferred a large measure of control over matters of internal self-government to the elected representatives of the people: and
4. It established a system of executive committees into which the legislature divided for the consideration of administrative and other matters.

The politicians who operated the Donoughmore Constitution were very critical of its provisions particularly because it reserved certain spheres of legislative and executive control to the representatives of the imperial government. Besides, the minorities including the Burghers very much resented the abolition of communal representation. The Burghers had all the more reason to do so, because they, being a very tiny minority, could not hope otherwise in any way to find a representation in the legislature. Being close to the imperial powers and more modern than other native communities they would not be reconciled to loss of special political status and privileges. But their resentment was confined to formal protests only. They did not chose to join hands with the Tamils to launch substantial agitations.

On the whole the constitution served a very useful purpose by providing a school of instruction and experience to Ceylonese politicians and by enabling them to work a scheme of internal self-government in the absence of organised parties and without encroaching much on minority interests. The Secretary of State for the Colonies paid the following tribute to the constitution in the year 1947:

"It is only necessary for me to mention the work of the Donoughmore Commission and the bold step taken in the constitution which emerged from that inquiry. It was an experiment in adult suffrage and in responsible democracy, and it contributed much to the political maturity and drive for effective democracy of the people of Ceylon. The system established by that constitution worked for fifteen years without serious political trouble, and it stood the strain of a world War"[17]

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17. House of Commons Debates, 5th Series, Column 1478 Umn.

Constitutional Developments
In Post-Independence Phase

After the second world war, steps were taken to revise the Donoughmore constitution with a view to overcome certain shortcomings evident from its working. The result was a new constitution but it survived for a few months only. In the light of promised independence to Ceylon, there started preparations for a new constitution. The briefly survived constitution retained most of the provisions of the Donoughmore constitution.

The main work on the 1948-72 constitution was undertaken by D.S. Senanayake, the island's leading statesman, who became Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister and the constitutional expert Sir Ivor Jennings who functioned as Draftsman and advisor. Senanayake and his colleagues in the state council wanted the Westminster model. With Jenning's assistance they fashioned the new set up with modifications in that to suit local requirements.

Here below we are not concerned with the details, but may examine its provisions particularly in terms of extent of representation to various communities. This is given in a table which analyses on racial basis the results of the first three general elections held in Ceylon after independence.

Table 5.1

Results of first Three General Elections*

Communities	1947	1952	1956
Sinhalese	68	75	74
Ceylon Tamils	13	12	12
Indian Tamils	7	1	—
Muslims	6	6	7
Burghers	1	1	1

*For the 1947 and 1952 General Elections results, see, *Constitution of Ceylon*, by Sir Ivor Jennings, p. 62. The Indian Tamil referred to by Sir Ivor in his table for 1952 was Mrs. Natesan who is generally not regarded as an Indian and was a member elected for a constituency in the Northern province. The figures for the 1956 elections were determined from the Hansard session 1956-1957, Vol. 24 . The 1956 figures total up to 94 as one member Mr. R.G. Senanayake represented two seats.

The table shows that the hopes of the Soulboury Commissioner that their delimitation scheme substantially embodied in the constitution, would furnish adequate representation of the minorities, were generally justified. The minorities constituted a little less than a third of the population of the country.

The new constitution, a written document, contained certain restrictions on the powers of Parliament. The last mentioned were mainly designed to protect the rights of minority groups from legislative discrimination. But there was often discrimination on the administrative plane.

Nevertheless there was a widespread conviction that the constitution was not designed to suit the genius of the people. It did show certain defects during the approximately twenty-five years of its working from 1956 onwards. Serious efforts were made to alter its provisions. A change was finally effected after the UF rode to victory in 1970.

The UF government led by Mrs. Bhandaranaike promulgated a new Republican Constitution in May 1972, resulting from the endeavours of a constitutent assembly, which was first convened in July 1970. The new constitution regularized existing practices and removed features which were thought to impede the smooth functioning of government and the implementation of the popular will. It nevertheless had many of the characteristics of its predecessors in other respects. All the same, it was claimed to be the result of the endeavours of the elected representatives of the people.

The 1972, Constitution declares the country a full republic. It provides for a unicameral legislature special status for Buddhism, a statement of fundamental rights and directive principles of State policy. Some of the essential features of its predecessors which it retained are those relating to the position of the President though with certain modifications, the principles of cabinet government, the cabinet, however, being vested with greater powers-and most important, the system of electoral demarcation with its bias towards the rural and sparsely populated areas. The new constitution marks a break from the old in that it specifically does away with any implicit or explicit seperation of powers. All powers are concentrated in a National State Assembly, though there is provision for a distribution of functions as between the Executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The Judiciary, however, will not have any right to pronounce on the constitutionality of legislation. The power is vested in the constitutional court of five judges appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister for a term of four years.

The constitution makes various provisions for the use of the national languages. Sinhalese is declared the official language, but attempts are made to accommodate the language of the principal minority group, the Tamils, in the administrative and judicial spheres.

Burghers On The Politico-Constitutional Development

In this part of the chapter an attempt has been made to discuss the patterns of political participation and attitude and the role the Burghers played right from pre-British times to Ceylon's independence. The earlier part of the chapter has dealt in length with the historical and constitutional aspects. Therefore, the political preception and role of Burghers will only be discussed here giving passing reference to the constitutional changes etc.

Alliance With The Europeans

For the last two centuries the focus in politics in Sri Lanka has been on constitutional advancement from colonial to self rule and from authoritarian regime to the supremacy of parliament, elected by universal franchise. The Legislative Council was first established in 1833, chiefly as a result of agitation by European business community, supported by the Burghers. its unofficial membership was so constituted that there was, in the eyes of the British, a balanced representation of the different peoples and communities including the Burghers,[18] Sinhalese, Tamils and Europeans. This set the pace for leaders of the Social' groups to assume distinct posture in politics though at the early stages the representatives functioned with a sense of duty and were less partison. Among the social groups the Burghers were quite clear and categorical in their stance as they all along collaborated with the British. Specially, as other groups agitated for the self-rule and were poised to usurp their power and status, they would strengthen the collaboration. This further estranged them from the rest of the society. In the 1840's and 50's the clamour for popular control over the legislative council was led by Elliot,[19] and other nominated European members and was supported by the majority of Burghers, who were on their own account interested in improving the prosperity of the English educated Burghers in the administrative services. Sir Henry Ward, the Governor (1855-1860) with high praise for the Burghers in the Government service, as mentioned earlier, however, considered that they possessed neither "the responsibility nor affection of the natives. .... If you value the peace cf Ceylon, you must never give these gentlemen a preponderence in the legislative council". He viewed the Burghers as "good servants" but "bad masters" and was opposed to any idea of a popular government. As Ward put it in 1859, "in a colony the population of which consists of seven or eight thousand settlers, a small though intelligent class of

18.   J.C. Hilebrand was the first Burgher to be elected to the Legislative Council.

19.   Elliot was the editor of the Colombo Observer.

Burghers, and two million Sinhalese, Tamil and Moormen, wholly unaccustomed to the working of a constitutional system ... the Crown must for many years hold the balance between European and native interests, if it wishes to see order maintained and legislation impartially conducted".[20]

Pressures For Democratization

With the object of demanding an unofficial majority in the legislative council the nominated European members combined with the Burghers to form the Ceylon League in 1864. Initially, the interests of both the groups coincided. However, soon tempers flamed in and out of the council chambers, both groups claiming to be acting in national interest. Their demands were rejected by the government, supported by the London Parliament. An outstanding Burgher who initiated this attempt towards self-government was Charles Ambroze Lorenz, who excelled with equal lustre as a lawyer, legislator and journalist, started the first non-government Ceylonese newspaper *"The Ceylon Examiner"*. He was loved and held by all communities in high esteem as a popular leader. In 1864 together with other unofficial members, he resigned his seat in the legislative council on the question of military contribution payable by the island to the Imperial Exchequer towards defence. With reference to the violence in Kandy and Colombo, where many Burghers live, the most unpopular Governor ever presided over the Colony of Ceylon, Lord Torrington, accused "bitter animosity" against himself and the Burghers when he thoughtlessly maligned them in a despatch to Earl Grey, Secretary of State for Colonies. He said "Efforts were made by one or two Europeans, supported and assisted by a peculiar class of people called the Burghers to kindle dissatisfaction in the minds of Sinhalese natives" to promote their own selfish purposes. He further emphatically stated his determination to "resist to the utmost these insidious attempts to prevent the native mind" to use the "strong arm of power" against "the half-bred descendents of the Dutch and the Portugese inhabitants".[21]

Agitated by such derogatory remarks on their community the Burghers of Colombo, regardless of what implications their actions might have on their future career in a land under thus despotism of "Crown Rule", convened a public meeting, passed resolutions and sent a memorial to the Secretary of State for Colonies, condemning Lord Torrington's derogatory remarks. "In one of your

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20   E.F.C. Ludowyk, The Story of Ceylon (London, 1962). p 236

21.   William, Digby "The Eurasians of Ceylon" Calcutta Review. Vol. 63. July 1876, pp. 185-86.

despatches to your Lordship, the Burghers are described descendents of the Dutch and Portugese inhabitants" not ashamed of the conditions in which some of your memorialist (for too many of the Burghers the offensive expression is inapplicable) have been placed by their maker, still surely, the unnecessary and ungracious allusions to the natural conditions of some of your memorialist, which is implied by the term "half-bred" must be repugnant to the fine and mainly feelings of Englishmen". Disproving the allegation of having "Kindled dissatisfaction",[22] they proceeded "the Burghers, my Lord, form a large portion of the inhabitants of this land; some of them hold high and respectable offices under the Government. Many are employed as clerks in public offices; and others among them independent of government, possessed much property, in the security of which they are naturally interested. What interest, what "selfish purpose" can men have my Lord to kindle dissatisfaction among the natives ?"

Other Governors have spoken in the highest term of commendation, but it was left to Lord Torrington after so short a sujourn in the island, to introduce them. At the time of preparing this memorial the Burghers were acting under the leadership of Englishmen, but the fact that they were sensitive to the derogatory criticism, and in a sense, they themselves as native defied to brave the powers so manfully is proof of their capacity for higher duties of citizenship, political awareness and participation.

A political society called 'the friends of Ceylon' was established which displayed great courage in resisting any infringement of their political rights.

The elective principle in ordinance No. 13 of 1910[23] was accepted for the first time when franchise was extended to Ceylonese who had received an education along European lines-roughly 4% of the population. (The new council consisted of 21 members with officials still forming majority; 6 were to be nominated to represent ethnic groups and four were to be elected to fill European rural, one Burgher to fill one "educated Ceylonese" seat. No employee of the Government could be elected as a member representating the electorate).

Here again, the available data show that the Burghers maintained the leading position among the natives. As is evident from table 5.2, the proportion

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22.   Ibid

23. . Under the ordinance an educated Ceylonese seat was added and the European and Burgher seats were turned into elected seats. The composition was thus 11 officials and 10 unofficials, 4 of the latter being elected, *Eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka* (Lake House, Colombo, 1977, p.330.)

of the Burghers among the total electorate has been 9.2% in 1911 while their share in population has been merely 0.7%. As compared to them, the Sinhalese appear to be quite backward. Being 75.1% in total population excluding Indian Tamils, their share among total registered voters was only 56.4%. Sri Lankan Tamils appear to have taken greater advantage of progressive measures in this respect.

The Ceylon National Congress was formed in 1919 with the union Sinhalese, Tamils, Burghers and other majority communities with a view to appeal to the British for further reforms. This resulted in 1920 in the expansion of the Legislative Council to a membership of 37. The seats of elected members were increased; but they were still not in the majority.

The Setback

As a group the elected representatives blossomed in influence but the position of the Burghers, Tamils and other minority representatives dwindled. A few Burghers to be found in the ranks of the Ceylon National Congress quit but one of them G. A. Willie remained until 1924. The Sinhalese were advocating western system of representation on a territorial basis rather than on community basis. The Burghers and other minorities found their political strength gradually dwindled as communal representation fell in disfavour. They along with other minorities, being apprehensive of the Sinhalese majority, urged for constitutional reforms with lesser vigour than the Sinhalese. Presumably they seemed to prefer representation under the British rather than grant of full independence with a constitution based on nationwide territorial franchise. The Sinhalese viewed the minorities as an obstruction to independence.[24]

But deteriorating political relations between the majority and the minority communities can be accounted for more by the growing competition for jobs in civil service and elsewhere. The Sinhalese, the majority community, as stated earlier, have been late starter in benefitting from the modern education. But once they started receiving it, they had a potential for bulk supplies for recruitment in civil service etc. They would also have the political clout to force it. This apparent from increasing share of male Sinhalese in select professions. In 1901, for example their share was 41.1%. It increased to 46% in 1921. Tamils also reaped similar benefits. But the share of Burghers steeply declines from 31.8% in 1901 to 17.7% in 1921. In absolute terms their share in new posts, was merely 98 (see table 5.3).

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24. W.H. Wriggins; *Ceylon:* Dilemmas of a New Nation (Princetion, 1960) pp. 83-84.

Table-5.2

Ethnic Composition of the Electorate Among the Educated Ceylonese
(December 1911)

COMMUNITIES	Registered Voters		Ceylonese Adult Male Population		Ceylonese and Indian Tamil Adult Male Population	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Sinhalese	1,659	56.4	700,015	75.1	700,015	62.4
Tamils	1,072¹	36.4	135,874	14.5	325,639	29.0
Burghers²	134	9.2	6,672	0.7	6,672	0.5
Ethnicity uncertain	73	2.4	--		--	--
Others³	--		11,947	1.2	11,947	1.0

Note : Compiled by D. Wesamperuma from the register of Voters available at the Ceylon National Archives. The total of 2,938 falls slightly short of the figures (2,957) provided in the Ceylone Blue books as the total number of registered Voters. The discrepancy arises from the fact that some had died and others had left the island since the register was initially formed.

1. There was also a seperate constituency for Burghers in which the only qualifications were racial stock and literacy in English.
2. Malay, Veddas and others
3. Includes Indian Tamils, but the vast majority were Ceylon Tamils.

Table-5.3

Ethnic Distribution in Select Occupations 1901-1921

	1901		1911		1921			
	1		**2**		**3**		**4**	
	Males in Select Professions		*Males in Select Professions*		*Total Ceylonese Male Population*		*Total Ceylonese Adult Male Population*	
	Figures	%	Figures	%	Figures	%	Figures	%
Low-Country Sinhalese	349	39.4	912	42.5	1,005,137	49,1	509,909	49,0
Kandyan Sinhalese	15	1.6	75	3.5	575,459	28.1	281,045	27.0
Sinhalese	364	41.0	987	46.0	1,580,596	77.2	790,954	76.0
Ceylon Tamils	214	24.1	684	31.9	263,048	12.8	139,361	13.3
Burghers	282	31.8	380	17.7	14,507	0.7	7,852	0.7
Moors	16	1.0	30	1.8	157,578	7.7	83,070	7.9
Others	9	1.0	51	2.3	27,365	1.3	18,970	1.9
CEYLONESE	885	100.0	2,142	100.0	2,043,094	100.0	1,040,207	100.0

Source : M. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Under the changed circumstances, therefore, the Burghers and other minorities should have felt no enthusiasm for self-rule and democratization which meant pre-eminence of the majority community and squeezing of certain privileges of the minorities.

Table-5 4

Legislative Council 1912-1921
Burgher Electorate and Nature of Contest

DE	TEL	TVOP	S	C	C	C
1911-12-12	2149	1468	--	HWVC	HGT	AH
				829	466	273
				CVV	JG	FHM
1916-02-19		1103	32	690	258	123

AA Author Alvis: C V V-Charles Vander Vall
F H M-F H Modder: H G T-Dr. H.G. Thomas
H W V C-Hector William Van Culenberg;
J G-Joseph Greiner

Table-5.5

Legislative Council 1921-1924
Burgher Electorate and Nature of Contest

DE	TEL	TVOP	S	C	C	C
1921-03-31	1159	UNC		AD		
1923-06-06		UNC		NJ		

A D R=Allen Brieberg; N J M-N.J. Martian

Key to Abbreviations

D E=	Date of Elections	S	=	Spoilt
T E L=	Total Electorate	C	=	Candidate
T V O P=	Total Votes polled	M	=	Majority
		U N C	=	Uicontested

The Burghers did try to face the changed situation in a more united fashion. This is evident from their preparation for and participation in the

elections. In 1911 and 1916, for example, there was good contest for filling up a seat for Burghers in the Legislative Council. In 1921 and 1923 elections, however, there were uncontested returns for the post. (Details are provided in Tables 5.4 and 5.5).

When the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931 was first debated in the Legislative Council, the Tamils and the Burghers voted against because under the new system of territorial representation, provided in it,.the minorities had proportionally lesser representation than under the previous constitution. One development which the minorities remember with disgust was the formation of Pan-Sinhalese Cabinet in 1936, and regarded this as a glaring example of Sinhalese' ambit on to dominate the minorities. Numerous resolutions and protests were made by the minorities about the Donoughmore Constitution. Throughout its duration (1931-1946), the Donoughmore Constitution was the object of vigorous and unremitting criticism. Ultimately the Soulbury Constitution came into effect in 1946 and provided a system of cabinet government. One seat was assigned to a population of 75,0000. In 1947 elections, one Burgher was elected. In 1948 it was revised to give the island full political independence.

Independence and Increasing
Alienation of the Burghers

The Burghers' community on the whole was not very enthused and felt sorry about the grant of independence in 1948 when the British handed over the power to the natives. This comes somewhat ironic. Until a couple of decades earlier, they were on the forefront demanding peoples association with the government. Throughout the 19th century and in early 20th century they organized protests against official majority in law making bodies. But when the moment came, they dreaded it and were prepared for back-stepping.

Behind this change in perspective of the Burghers were the political experiences of a couple of decades preceding the year of independence. As already stated, with the increase in the strength and influence of the Ceylon National Congress, the role of Sinhalese Buddhists was increasing in Sri Lankan politics. The late modernization of majority community nevertheless meant a severe cut in the share of the early modernized minority communities. This was finally confirmed in the demand for replacement of communal representation by the territorial representation. It was finally conceded by the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931.

Systematic Discrimination

Thus, the Burghers like other minorities feared that independence would only accelerate the pace of increased Sinhalization at the cost of other minorities. They feared that not merit but number will be the deciding factor. Constituting less than 1% of total population, they were highly disadvantaged in this score. Their worst fears came true after independence when the new governments whether of the UNP or the SLFP announced certain policy measures. To fulfill the demands of the majority community, the new governments announced certain decisions one after another directly offending the minority communities. Some of the important decisions are.

    (i)   Enacting 'Sinhala only' Act in 1956 which made the Sinhalese the national and official language. This placed the non-Sinhalese-Speaking minorities at a great disadvantage. This included the Burghers whose mother tongue was English and who found entry in public service tougher because of the change.

    (ii)   Nationalization of private educational institutions in the fifties was another blow to the efforts of the minorities to maintain their separate identity. Most of the institutions were managed by the christians. The Burghers naturally had to feel offended.

    (iii)   Simultaneously, there were placed great curbs on the activities of the missionaries. A number of them were asked to leave the country. This had the effect of severing the external links for the Burghers who, otherwise, have not been very much interested in propagation of their faith.

    (iv)   The 1972 constitution enacted by United Front government led by Mrs. Bhandarnaike granted Buddhism, a special status. Non-Buddhists were not to be suppressed. But they were certainly to feel as second class citizen.

    (v)   The new Governments came to place greater attention on the development of central upcountry and south western low country regions. A good number of Burghers particularly the Portugese ones were living in other areas, viz. Batticaloa in the Eastern Part. For them, it was a case of missing the bus.

These are highly general cases affecting the whole community. Besides, there are said to be a number of cases of discrimination at personal level. That would only add to the anguishment and disappointment of the Burghers.

The Burghers on the Retreat

The discrimination was not particularly directed against the Burghers. But they, along with the Tamils had all the more reasons to feel offended. Among various minority communities, one lists out the two because of their being more advanced and well entrenched in public service and other modern sectors than the rest. Faced with the dwindling prospects, the two communities had all the valid reasons to feel aggrieved.

In the initial stage, that is, around 1931 when the Donoughmore Constitution was enacted and it dropped the first signal of favouring the majority community, the two communities appeared to have a common understanding and determination to fight for safeguarding their minority rights. But as independence came close, their paths appear to have diverged. The Tamils acquired more and more militancy with the passage of time so much so that as of now they have created civil war conditions.

The Burghers' changed response has been different. They staged a complete retreat not only from the political life but also from other sectors of life. This was carried to the extent of leaving the island for greener pastures abroad.

The Burghers have had a two-fold advantage in this respect. They have been well educated exhibiting professional excellence in several modern sectors. Secondly, being of European descent on the father-side, they would be more acceptable to the European people than other native folk. They could find easy entry in Australia and Newzeland not only for their sparse population but also, fast expanding economies. Besides, they have migrated to a number of European countries. The migration is so high that more than 75% of the Burghers have left the island. They include the best brains of the community. Understandably, the Burghers find things made difficult for them in the country and they feel highly alienated so much so that there is no attempt to preserve separate identity.

Zeroing Political Role

From the foregoing discussion it is obvious that the process of Sinhalization has not fanned the fire of separate nationality among the Burghers. This may look strange but understandable, for the community has a strength of only a few thousand. Yet as we saw in the last chapter, the members of the community have been preserving their traditional life style and separate cultural identity. Considering their social background nobler, they felt very high of

themselves. Naturally, they would maintain a distance from other communities. The same would make them reject Sinhalization at political level.

This would not leave much scope for political role for the Burghers. There is no determined move on their part to influence politico-electoral processes. In no constituency they are in a substantial strength to invite the attention of contesting parties or candidates, let alone being in majority to send their own candidates. The lone Burgher, contesting and winning elections, hails from the Communist Party. He also has been a Minister in UF Government led by Mrs. Bhandarnaike (1970-77) But this has hardly anything to do with his being a Burgher. He himself claims to be in politics as a communist and not as a Burgher. Hardly any other Burgher is found contesting elections seriously (see table 5.6 for community profile of Ministers).

Table 5.6

Representation of Kandyans and others by Caste and Race in the 197O Cabinet

Communities		Number
Sinhalese :	Goyigama Kandyan	8
	Goyagama Low Country	5
	Salagama	2
	Karva	2
	Vahunpura	1
Moor		1
Tamil		1
Burgher (a)		1
Total		21

a. Descendent of Sinhalese Dutch Intermarriages.
Source : Derived from list of twenty-one cabinet ministers in Mrs. Bhandarnaike's United Front
                Government at (May 1970). *Ceylon Daily News*, Seventh Parliament of Ceylon,
                1970 (Colombo, ANCL, 1970) Page-7.

They even refrain from party politics whether governmental or oppositional. Similarly they have little faith in use of other methods like submitting petitions or launching agitations for making state to fulfil demands. Most of the Burghers, in fact, find attempts to migrate out more rewarding than attempts to seek political privileges locally.

Young Burghers for Sinhalization

Lately, there is a trend noticed towards accepting Sinhalization by moving out of their shell to learn Sinhalese language. This trend is conspicuously noticeable among the young Burghers who regret the decision of their elders to stick to colonial heritage. Because of this the community has not only kept away from the mainstream, but also rendered itself irrelevant for the country's affairs and finally thereby surrendered all its claims for a share in the politico-developmental processes.

The change in attitude can be perceived as effected by the more down-to-earth attitude of the younger generation. Born in post-independence phase they are neither the beneficiaries of the colonial favours to the half sons (those claiming parentage from the European powers on father side), nor they carry the romantic notions about so called noble life and aristocratic traditions in colonial era. Living a commoner's life they find English language not of much use for bread earning within the country. Finally, the prospects for migration have been turning bleaker every day with developed economies passsing through certain crises and finding it difficult to absorb Afro-Asian migrants. A situation of saturation was fast developing in this respect.

These factors appear to have softened the ego of the Burghers a bit. The economic hardships that they are facing owing to a restricted entry for the non-sinhalese in the job-market, appears to have forced them to have an about-turn and agree to learn the language of the majority community, the Sinhalese. No longer, they frown on it as a language of the natives. They want to learn it to enhance their job prospects. Similarly, they are prepared to accept other symbols used by the Sinhalese as a way to build the bridges with the majority community.

Overcoming the Schizophrenic Traits:An Overview

We have discussed above how the Burghers developed split personality. Torn between romantic notions of aristocracy in colonial days and struggle for a minimum living standard in independence phase, the community has been getting alienated from the mainstream and even migrating out. In fact, one can anticipate the future trends in what J.R. Toussaint pointed out, about 50 years ago, as to why the Burghers had a declining interest in politics in the present century. He opined that as individuals they have been as keen as others in all movements in the social and political advancement of the Ceylonese. During the last hundred years they were among the acknowledged leaders of the people.

The newly developed and vigourously asserted race consciousness in all other communities has, however, for the moment constrained the old relations. By inherited instinct the Dutch Burghers always abided by the law and order. They readily united with all who toiled to advance the progress of the island and to promote goodwill and justice among its people. They continued to maintain, as they always did very friendly feelings towards the other communities. Many of the Burghers apprehended that there was no future vista for them in Sri Lanka. Those who could afford to do so have left, or are planning to leave, the country for good. They believe that they will find in Australia and Canada greater opportunities for pursuing a better way of life in keeping with the traditions.

Mass migration is not only an impractical but also undesirable solution to the problems of the Burghers. It reflects manifestation of defeatism and frustration in them. The minority community must either stand together in defence of its rights and to preserve its cultural identity or submit to being gradually merged into the mainstream by way of inter-marriages, picking up Sinhalese as mothertongue or other processes of absorption and integration.

Though it is difficult to say how far these solutions will affect the future of the community, yet it is unlikely that substantial numbers will be removed from the problem situation in which they are placed by accident of history. Indeed, if ever the Baconion dictum was justified in application, it is to these results of miscegenation long past, whose unthinking participation left behind this group that was, is and will continue to be menaced by any vagaries in the social and political milieu in which they have no share of effective influence. Still some ray of hope is that the young generation is better equipped to read the writing on the wall. Inspired by the survival instinct, it is willing to join the mainstream in a more realistic way.

6

Conclusion

The study sought to identify challenges faced by the Burghers, a microscopic minority in Sri Lanka, particularly since independence. The Burghers have been product of a historical process of Portuguese, Dutch and British hegemony over Sri Lanka. It led to the emergence of a new community on account of intermingling of these three distinct racial groups with the local population. With the independence of Sri Lanka this community found itself interacting with a political system dominated by the majority community whose mono-nationalism guided the affairs of the system. It was for unity in diversity in a plural social order. To this the Burghers responded with great alarm and suspicion for implying some set-back, while at the same time they are also trying to retain their distinctive identity. They appear desperate and even leaving the country in a big way. Every plural society inevitably has its problems, which often seem incapable of solution. But solutions are by no means impossible. In Malaya, for instance, a solution seems to be working out between the Malaya and the Chinese, who differ radically from each other, though there is no centuries old tradition of hostility between them, as there is between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Possibly if the latter two were distinct races rather than communities the issues might be clearer and the solution more simple; possibly, too, if both communities were less politically minded. Here it can be added that the Burghers on this score are not so politically minded and can easily be accommodated. Perhaps for that, the minority community would have to liberate itself from an ethos which at times is suspected to be an amalgam of persecution-complex, isolation, and constrained superiority phobia.

Its survival with all numerical weaknesses and with dwindling prospects under the pressure of mounting Sinhalization, is symbolic of unqiue legacy of the political colonial rule and inherent strength of the community. Another important aspect of the community behaviour is their unique responses to the processes of modernization and democratic politics which is somewhat atypical of minority communities in the third world. Generally, the minorities,

feeling the weight of assertive majorities with or without democratization in post-colonial era, either fight it out to preserve their identity or just give in. The Burghers, on the other hand, are either emigrating to other countries for greener pastures or have just cordoned themselves off from external pressure. Only very recently, the younger generation is found vouching for coming out to join the mainstream.

The Burghers in a Plural Setting

Again, among themselves, the Burghers tend to preserve traditional sub-groups and behavioural norms which is again atypical of a minority which as to counter threat to its identity, tries to sink differences among its sub-groups. May be, so diverse is Sri Lanka in terms of language, culture and religion that even the Burghers, relics of centuries of Western European occupation of the island, who comprise about 0.3% of the present population, are not a homogenous community.

Historically, Sri Lanka passed through 450 years of Western European rule, with the Portugese, the Dutch and the British occupying the island in succession in that order. The protracted European rule which ended only three and a half decades ago, with its inevitable legacy contributed significantly to contermporary social, economic, cultural and political issues in a plural, Sri Lanka. The Burghers are especially proud of their ancestry and consider themselves socially superior to the Sinhalese and Tamil population.

They are generally peaceful and law abiding citizens, possess strong home loving tendencies and affection for kindred. Violence is virtually unknown among the Burghers as a social group, though they may give vent to the pent-up feelings through foul words expressed in Portuguese patois and sometimes in anonymous letters. They love to sip alcoholic beverages moderately. The Burghers take great pride in reading western novels. Many old Dutch customs intermixed with Sinhalese practices were in vogue amongst them. The desire for fair complexion was not important. The wish, however, is revealed in the remarks of a visitor about the new born when he remarks, "I think it will be a fair child". The birth itself had been announced by the continuous striking of a brass pan allegedly intended to "drown the cries of the infant lest evil spirits should be attracted to the spot".

Economic Life

As a class the Burghers have a tendency towards "dressy display and ornamentation"[1] of the body. Regardless of their economic condition, rich or poor, they try to maintain a high standard of living consistent with their past traditions and values. Their life style and their low salaries lead them to chronic indebtness to the Moor traders, the main business community of the island. In the past, during the imperial era this community, particularly those of the Dutch origin, were financially much better off and enjoyed a high standard of living. After the British rule became consolidated in Sri Lanka, the British felt the necessity to recruit persons to man the thousand and one inferior offices in the government administration and Merchantile firms. Since the Burghers were English speaking, fairly educated with westernised way of living and had the aptitude for the performance of duties, (they knew how taxes were collected, what dues were traditionally owed by the Sinhalese to the company and how law and order was administered), they were able to get closer to the British, find a way in the imperial service and enjoy official patronage. It is, of course, true that even when the Dutch Burghers reaped benefits of proximity to the British rulers, they did find the rule itself causing a little downslide in their socio-political status. The British would not be as charitable as their Dutch counterparts for reasons of blood ties. Many Dutch Burghers fell from a position of "opulence" to one of "bare competitive" and were thrown into ultimate prospects of poverty — an inevitable sequel to the change of government. To save as much as posible the Burghers had to think of collaboration with the new regime.

However the Burghers were provided opportunity to man several posts, mainly clerical in the service of government and merchantile firms. They also took up teaching, medical and legal professions often with outstanding success. With the expansion of the judicial system, the Burghers entered the courts as lawyers and soon there was a preponderance of them there. By 1833 almost all the magisterial posts were held by the Burghers, much to the chargin of the Ceylonese. Sir Alexender Johnston, an Englishman, earlier king's advocate, subsequently Chief Justice and President of Council, who was the champion and propounder of Burghers, had wrought great things on their behalf. He petitioned to His Majesty's Government to treat the Burghers at par with other Europeans and used his personal influence to ensure better place for them in the Judiciary and other government departments. The greatest ambition cherished by them

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1. William Digby "The Eurasians of Ceylon" *Calculate Review*, Vol. 63, July 1876. pp. A3-206.

was to enter the Government service. In fact with this community clerical services became a tradition. Even the ablest among them manifested a fascination and a preference for the government service. The attraction was not the salary, for as clerks they were miserably underpaid; but it was the pension secured after service as well as the sense of respectability it conferred. Consequently, the "volunteer clerk" has been known to habitually scribble on whole sheets of foolscap his name followed by the abbreviation C.C.S.[2]. Others as advocates, among them, have risen to great fame, though not often to affluence (Colonial Englishmen were much puzzled witnessing a Burgher of great attainments and leader of Supreme Court Bar relinquishing his high unofficial position to become Queen's Deputy Advocate for the Island.)

Inspite of their low salaries in the C.C.S., high life and chronic indebtness, the Burghers' penchant for and performance in the government service had earned due respect and many a compliments were paid to them. They were described as "backbone of the white Bureaucracy under the British rule". Sir Henry Ward, the then Governor of Ceylon 1855-1860 compared them to the "bronzen wheels which though hidden from sight, kept the golden hands of the government in motion". An English Civil servant said: "I look upon the civil servants as being the best friends and proctors the natives have". In a sense they were more than what the Burgher element of national life denoted as the social force through which the natives were brought in closer contact with Europeans and have been taught to share the burden of the social and municipal life.

The Retreat after Independence

The Burghers displayed striking capacity for adaptation during the British time—the speed at which they acquired all proficiency in English language and then adopted it as their mothertongue, and consequently were able to dominate and perform with distinction in the Government Service and in other professions. This is at extreme with their limited horizon, in the sense that a few of them joined other social groups in the exploitation of opportunities in the country's economy.

With the dethronment of the English language by the Sinhala Act in 1956, a large number of the Burgher population found bleak prospects of career in civil service. They took to migrating mainly to Australia, to seek better opportunities for pursuing a way of life consistent with their traditions.

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2. C.C.S. stands for Ceylon Civil Service.

Although the number of emigrants have increased in recent years they still represent a small but privileged portion of the entire community. By and large, the Burgher community is not an economically very prosperous group though they maintain old aristocratic style. Those serving have barely enough pay packets and those not so fortunate are facing considerable hardship.

Concluding, one may say that the transfer of imperial power from the Dutch to the British brought about a change in the socio-economic status of the Burghers. This could, however, be termed a change more of degree than of kind, but the greatest blow that members of this community faced, was with the declaration of independence in Sri Lanka when political power was transferred from the British to the Sinhalese. The Burghers who had all along equipped themselves to work for their new European masters, resented the rule of a group whom they considered socially inferior.

Economically too they were losing government jobs in favour of Sinhalese and Tamils. So they with the European blood in their veins, thought the best way to maintain their socio-economic status was to migrate to western countries rather than stay at home and face ridicule of the local population.

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INDEX

L

League of Nations, 4
Legislative Council, 1833, 62, 68, 71, 75
Lewis, John W, 2
London Parliament, 69
Lorenz, Charles Ambroze, 69
Loss of identity, 2
LSSP, 13
Ludowyk, E F C, 59, 69

M

Majority-minority relations, 5
Malaya, 16, 26, 81
Marriott, Mckim, 57
Medical practitioners, 24
Mendis, G C, 23, 26, 62
Merchantile firms, 83
Microscopic minority, 44
Migration of Jews, 4
Migration to Western countries, 51, 85
Militant conflict, 55
Minister of UF Government, 78
Minogue, K, 54
Minorities, 1
Minorities communities, 2
Minority, 6
Minority nationalism, 54
Modernization, 2, 3
Mohammad Ali Jinnah, 26
Monolithic societies, 4
Mono-nationalism, 58
Moor traders, 48
Multi-religious societies, 5
Muslim community, 16
Mydral, Gunnar, 20, 21

N

National goals and values, 1
National integration, 2, 3, 4, 44, 46,
National State Assembly, 67
National unity, 4, 54
Nationalism, 3
Nationalization of educational
    institutions, 76
Nationality problem, 28-29, 57
Nation-building process, 1, 4

Nissanka, H S S, 52
Non-official members, 62
North-East monsoon, 10

O

Obstruction to independence, 71
Opulence, 83
Ordinance No. 13 of 1910, 70
Origin of Burgher Community, 36-37
Origin of community, 31

P

Pan-Sinhalese Cabinet, 1936, 75
Parliamentary democracy, 61
Partition of India, 3
Patois language, 39
Personal interviews, 58
Phadnis, Urmila, 56
Pitched battles, 56
Plural setting of Burghers, 82
Policy of Dundas, 62
Political behaviour of Burghers, 59
Political consciousness, 62
Political history of Sri Lanka, 14
Political identities in Sri Lanka, 55
Political inarticulation, 48
Political independence, 62
Political life of the Burghers, 31
Political mainstream, 59
Political participation, 67
Politico-administrative process, 53
Politico-constitutional developments,
    60-61
Politico-cultural policies, 57
Politico-economic institutions, 2
Politico-economic privileges, 54
Politico-ideological frameworks, 55
Politics of integration, 54-55
Population in Sri Lanka, 13, 25
Portuguese Burghers, 36, 38, 40, 41
Portuguese consolidation, 31-32
Portuguese history, 36
Portuguese inhabitants, 68-69
Portuguese maladministration, 34
Post-independence, 59
Post-independence changes of
    Burghers, 53

(Contd. from inner flap.)

propagating their own language and culture. While Tamil militant resistance or sinhalization is well publicized, the reaction of such a tiny community like Burghers is relatively unknown. The present study to attempts to bring to light hitherto patterns of unnoticed response to threats to minority identity. Besides delineating a profile, it specifically seeks answers to questions such as what happens to them in the face of encroachment on their identity ? How is their demand for social justice and assured identity met out or responded to by the ruling elite ? What strategies are considered effective for the minorities lacking in politico-numerical strength.

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