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Dr. K. Kailasapathy, Professor of Tamil & Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Jaffna passed away recently, while this issue was in print.

This article that adorns this issue is perhaps his last major contribution in English before his untimely demise.

Professor Kailasapathy was closely associated with this journal since its inception and had served on its Editorial Board.

A distinguished scholar, teacher, writer and literary critic, Professor Kailasapathy made a substantial and lasting contribution to the field of Tamil studies which won him the much deserved recognition both in Sri Lanka and abroad.

As the founder - President of the then Jaffna Campus, Professor Kailasapathy played a key and pioneering role in laying the foundation for the growth this new institution for higher learning in Jaffna. Later, as Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Jaffna, he rendered a valuable service to the development of the Faculty of Arts and towards the smooth running of the University.

The University community would sadly miss this once familiar and dominant personality in the 'corridors of learning'.

Professor Kailasapathy will, for ever, be remembered for his numerous and erudite writings - in both Tamil and English - which immensely enriched contemporary Tamil studies.

This issue of the journal is dedicated to the late Professor Kailasapathy in appreciation of the services rendered by this great scholar, teacher and intellectual.

**Editor**

# THE SRI LANKA JOURNAL OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

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# **THE SRI LANKA JOURNAL OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES**

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## EUROPEAN INFLUENCES ON MODERN TAMIL POETRY— BHARATHI AND THE EUROPEAN POETS \*

K. KAILASAPATHY

In dealing with European influences on Modern Tamil Poetry, with particular reference to Bharathi, I shall in this paper consider and concentrate on the Romantic movement, which probably, has been the most important influence to come from the West. My overall approach is both theoretical and documentary. I shall not try to cover all the ground. The main features of the influence and the manner in which the Romantic elements inspired many Tamil writers to reach out for artistic fulfilment will be indicated. The various parts of the general movement will be delineated and traced to their sources of inspiration. The remarkable endurance of the Romantic elements in Tamil culture, often unrecognized and unquestioned but nonetheless germane to much of the literary effusion, is in itself proof of the relevance of these elements to our modern movement. Every so often, there occur in the arts certain major eruptions which seem to affect all their products and radically change their temper. European Romanticism is a convenient illustration.

The origin of the word Romantic is too well known to need restatement. However, since there is no indigenous Tamil word synonymous with it, and as I have just said, the impact of Romanticism has resulted in the marking off much of modern Tamil literature from the literature of the previous period, a general explanation of the original meaning of the word and its semantic extensions will be useful. It is interesting to contemplate on the fact that while appropriate terms have been coined in our language for Classicism, Realism, Naturalism and such other technical ex-

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\* A revised version of a paper read at the Evelyn Rutnam Institute, Jaffna, on March 3, 1982, commemorating the Birth Centenary of Subramania Bharathi.

pressions, a satisfactory and acceptable word coextensive in sense for Romanticism is yet to be found. I am sure the implications of this merit some thought. But I should not tarry too much at this point. And I do not wish to give the impression that in saying this I know the reasons. Perhaps one difficulty is that Romanticism means not one but many things. That will, I hope, become clear in the course of my discussion.

Romanticism as a movement flourished in Europe in the Nineteenth Century although its beginnings were in the last quarter of the preceding century. As often happens different people prefer different dates. Ernst Fischer for instance argues that Romanticism was the dominant attitude of European Art and literature from Rousseau's *Discourses* until *The Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels.<sup>1</sup> From Europe the movement spread to America. As a result it was a European and American movement broadly pervading through the literary and artistic effort of more than a century—if we take into account its prelude and the aftermath of the main achievements. Being a pan-continental and trans-continental movement its efflorescence varied from country to country both in time and degree. But everywhere it manifested a strong reaction to existing cultural and artistic norms and values. Generally speaking Romanticism as a European phenomenon lasted from about 1780 and 1850. By mid Nineteenth Century the major figures associated with the movement were dead: Byron, Shelley, Blake, Keats, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Pushkin, Lermontov, Goya, Buchner, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, Bellini, Balzac, Stendhal, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Novalis, and Wackenroder.<sup>2</sup>

What is to be borne in mind is that hardly any creative endeavour was left untouched by these Romantics: literature, painting, sculpture and music of course benefited most. As has been pointed out by Jacques Barzun, all the forms, ideas, perceptions, tendencies, *genres* and critical principles had been put forward which the rest of the nineteenth century was to make use of in its further development.<sup>3</sup> In terms of their attitudes and actions the following may be recapitulated: in poetry the Romantics chose to admit all words in contrast to what may be called a specialized poetical diction. By 'all words' was meant the 'language such as men do use'; in mythology a departure was made from the sole reliance on the Classical, that is, Graeco-Roman, to Celtic and Germanic; in drama they reacted to the strict adherence to the classical "rules" of the unities and exercised great freedom in handling observable diversities; (it is to the lasting credit of the Romantic generation that it admired Shakespeare and extolled his artistic greatness); in painting they rejected the prescription of the Academy which restricted them to antique subjects and took in a new range of subjects and new artistic methods; in music defying the rules prohibiting "the use of certain chords, tonalities, and modulations" they exploited the sound of instruments in order to achieve musical effects; (the secularization of sacred music was to a large extent accomplished by Romantics); in their attitude to the past, they repudiated the prevalent assumption that nothing

worthy had taken place after the fall of the Roman Civilization; they **rediscovered** the Middle Ages and drew sustenance from them. The novels of Walter Scott (1771-1832) particularly the historical novels, which he practically invented exemplify this aspect of the Romantics' interest. In fact one of the salient aspects of the Romantic movement was its serious concern with history. The reverence for the past shown by some of the Romantics is really remarkable. In their response to cities and urban centres the Romantics shared certain common features. They travelled to far off lands and continents and gave a new dimension and literary respectability to the word "exotic"; (it is a well-known fact that German Romantics like Schelling, Schleiermacher, Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Schlegel and others responded to the discovery of Indian Culture with cries of ecstasy); their inclusiveness in accommodating folk arts that were despised by the earlier period gave an impetus to the flowering of new art forms enriched by the influx of folk literature and folk music. When we come to religion and politics too the Romantics were unorthodox in many ways. Not all of them were conformists and some of them were non-believers.

While these were the chief characteristics and positive contributions of the Romantic movement it must also be remembered that it was at the same time basically the result of a conscious revolt against the rigid but impotent conventions and rules of Neo-Classicism. This deliberate revolt against dead habit and decadent tradition gave the Romantics a sense of struggle or as Goethe put it, a feeling of strife meaning resistance, opposition and eventual success or failure. Although many Romantics suffered from a deep feeling of melancholy and were often pessimistic, there were others who were imbued with voluntarism, which was a characteristic feature of romantic art. Byron's poetry reverberates with it.

Throughout the 19th Century educational horizons were widening in India. Beginning from the days of Macaulay's reforms in 1835 all higher education in India had been conducted in English. The aim of the British rulers was to bring up a class of men who would be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect". For this purpose and as a result of a conscious policy of discouraging too much of "scientific" education for the natives, aclassical type of curriculum was encouraged by the Britishers. "Right away, this new educational system was weighted down by an almost exclusive emphasis on literary pursuits, as distinct from scientific and technical instruction".<sup>4</sup> Everything was well set for the Europeanization of India's elite. In 1854 every province had seen the creation of a Department of Public Instruction which tried to help schools run on Western models. Thus in the 1850s the study of the English language and its great literature by the Tamil elite became a matter of course. And through the English language a contact was established with the literatures of Europe. It is true that although the Tamil elite felt attracted to the English language and studied with avidity, they never became Anglicized to the extent that some Bengalis were swept off their feet. But there was sufficient necessity to study English since it was coming to the forefront under the British administration.

So when the study of English was taken up earnestly by Tamils, who like all others under British rule, thought it held the key to the power and prestige of the British people in India, it was mainly the literature of the Romantic period that was immediately available to them. Of course the literature of the previous ages were no doubt there, and were eagerly studied, but the past itself was rediscovered and selected and presented by the Romantics. What Buddha Deva Bose (1908-1974) says in connection with Bengali literature may *mutatis mutandis* be said of the Tamil context:

This predisposition, as we might call it, was nowhere more manifest than in literature; it was the literature of Europe, rather than its physical or social sciences which, for the Bengali mind, had extraordinary, elixir-like qualities. Indeed, the elixir was at first used as an intoxicant, for it was really Shelley and Shakespeare that our ancestors got drunk on, sherry and champagne being merely pretexts. Shakespeare, Shelley and Blake, the literature of the English tongue, this from the beginning, is what England has meant to certain sections of Bengalis, and in the politically disanglicized future, will mean to increasingly larger numbers. This has been an inspiration in the literal sense: our literature was inspired and reascent.<sup>6</sup>

While the new educational system generated a strong inclination towards English certain other things were also happening, the most important of which was the discovery of the ancient Tamil grammatical and literary works. The *Sangam* corpus, *Tolkappiyam* and most of the post - *Sangam* works in particular were almost lost to the Tamil literary world by the Eighteenth Century which was on the whole a period of darkness and desolation for the Tamils.<sup>9</sup> In this situation of degeneration and paralysis the discovery of the ancient texts came forth as a ray of light and hope. The modern movement was paradoxically enough partially fecundated by the springs of the ancient past. In many ways one can see an analogy between the European Renaissance and the Tamil awakening. It will be recalled that the influx of fugitive scholars from the Eastern Roman Empire bringing valuable manuscripts with them, contributed to the rediscovery of Latin writers like Catullus, Lucretius and the main body of Greek literature which led to a revival of classical studies and humanistic pursuits. Of course there were also other important factors that stimulated and assisted the Renaissance. But the impact of the rediscovered writings of classical antiquity and the revival of learning cannot be undervalued. They determined to a large measure the forms in which the Renaissance manifested itself. For instance the structural rigidity of the classical tragedy in Europe resulted from the influences of the early plays.

The rediscovery of *Tolkappiyam* and the *Sangam* poems gave a fillip to the notion of classicism among the Tamil scholars who at once equated it with the classicism of which their English mentors took such pride. As much as the Renaissance and post-Renaissance writers and artists in Europe fell under the spell of the



works and norms of classical antiquity, the Tamil scholars too, thought it fit to be governed by the prescriptions of the earliest works. In the minds of many Tamil scholars a sort of parity had been established between European and Tamil classicism.

It has been observed in the European context that Classicism was a movement aiming at uniformity. It was also elitist in attitude. Tolappiyar's aphorism *ulakam enpatu uyarntor mette*, 'the term world denotes the noble ones' must have satisfied the ego of several English educated Tamil scholars who were privileged to have had that education and the attendant benefits. In imitating the early authors and adhering to the ancient grammars the neo-classicists of our recent past were seeking a stability within known limits. Given their social status they preferred certainty and stability in literary endeavour which gave them scope, high honours and satisfaction. That is one reason why many of the neo-Classicalists had a penchant for poetry than prose. Prose was still in the making and had no classical models to go by. Steeped as they were in a convention of bookish culture, they chose the metres for the several *genres* on the basis of similarity with ancient usage. Likewise their subjects too were generally didactic in character. They emphasized the efficacy of the rules or to put it in another way insisted on the priority of rule over meaning.

It was under these circumstances that the European Romantic movement began to attract the minds of many Tamil writers. They gravitated towards Romantic faith as a result of the failure of neo-Classicism to satisfy their felt needs. But more important was the immense upheavals that were taking place in the society and consequently in the minds of men. The longing for freedom—both physical and psychological—was tormenting many sensitive persons. As the Romantic Shelley himself said of his time, many were moved by "a passionate desire to transform the world." Boris Suchkov has described the essence of the artistic leap from Classicism to Romanticism.

Romanticism was extremely sensitive to the mobility and pulse of history and, breaking with the canons of Classicism, the static form of Classical works, and with the objective form of realist works, it made subjective freedom of expression its banner, regarding only the free soaring fantasy of the writer, not subject to any laws or prescriptions, as being capable of presenting the dynamics of life. Indeed, the works of romanticists reveal a free treatment of composition, liberties taken with the order of narration, and a free choice of place and time for the action. The authors' presence is felt throughout, and many romantic works are really protracted monologues. The feelings in romantic poetry are intensified and exaggerated, and on the whole romanticism concentrates on man's inner world looking on life and history as the theatre in which people's passions and ideas are realised, determining by their fortuitous play and flux, the flux of life.'

By now it would have become clear how much of modern Tamil literature answers these descriptions. There are two ways by which we can hope to see the dynamics of an artistic movement: the manner in which it affects the lives of the artists and the extent to which it permeates their creativity. By Romantic life we generally mean a person's deep concern with ideas and things and a passion for realising his aspirations in action—by changing the world or the self. This passion and energy for action can be seen in the Artist's chosen means—studies, researches, involvements, sacrifices and political options. Partly resulting from this passion for involvement and action was the proverbial unhappiness of the Romantic, often due to unhappy love, invalidity, opiate addiction, poverty or persecution. This suffering in turn induces self-pity and egocentric display. The crux of the matter is that the Romantics felt it impossible to go on writing almost entirely in conventions that were already well accepted, and felt that new conventions were urgently needed and had to be created. These remarks, obvious as they may seem, are meant to serve as a convenient framework to what follows. For I wish to discuss Bharathi who may be described as generally representative of the Romantic movement.

Now, Bharathi very deliberately turning his back on what our neo-Classicists of the late Nineteenth Century found “poetic”, tried to create his own idiom, although it must be remembered that certain poets within the confines of the religious tradition—like Gopalakrishna Bharathi (c. 1785-1875) and Ramalinga Swami (1823-1874)—were intuitively tending towards it.

Bharathi's verse, finding the prevailing forms and metres inadequate to cope with his new creative impulses, breaks through the rigidity of convention and reaches out to the common man. Bharathi analysed the causes of decay of poetry in Tamil. In an article titled *Punarjanmam*, ‘Rebirth’, in the sense of Renaissance, he wrote as follows:

Books of ancient times were written in the language then in vogue. As times change, language too changes, old words became obsolete yielding place to new ones. Poets should adopt words that will be clearly understood by the people of their age. Different epochs require different expressions. Good poetry is that which conveys exquisite inner visions in easy and elegant style. When poetry becomes obscure or ornate it ceases to be enjoyable and will repel the populace.

Elsewhere he said, certainly referring to the neo-Classical verses, “sincerity disappeared giving place to mere verbal embellishments. But the great Kamban thought differently when he compared the bright, clear cool flow of the Godavari to great poetry”. His most lucid proposition on the language of poetry was made in the Preface to *Panchalisabatham*, ‘Vow of Panchali’ (1910):

He who produces an epic in simple style and diction, easily understandable metres and popular tunes will be infusing a new life into our language.

The meaning must be crystal clear even to the neo-literates; at the same time, the poem must not be wanting in the graces and refinements that are expected of an epic.

This was a new poetic manifesto—the manifesto of Tamil poetry of the 20th Century. I don't need to point out that Bharathi was consciously appealing to a general reading public away from the exclusive elite that chiefly read poetry when he began to write. He was describing a style simple to follow and to understand. Needless to say Bharathi's proclamation is reminiscent of the "advertisement" prefixed by Wordsworth to the volume of *Lyrical Ballads* that he published with Coleridge in 1798. What was most provocative in Wordsworth's definition was his intent to choose modest and familiar themes, subjects drawn from "humble and rustic life" expressed in "the real language of men". I don't want to make too much of the resemblance between the theory of poetry of Wordsworth and Bharathi, but the similarity is striking and relevant. What is significant is the recognition that poetic modes reflect the degree of the poet's self-awareness and self-knowledge. Bharathi belongs to an overall reawakening of consciousness and self-conscious modernization that took place in India. Poets in other Indian languages shared this trend, proclaiming a "new sensibility, a new meaning, a new abundance" in poetics.

"This intellectual awakening was bound, sooner or later, to percolate down into the world of action and politics", for, "all the great movements of our century, in India as elsewhere in Asia, are all inclusive movements, grounded at first on a blind revolt against the forcible imposition of a western culture that is finally rejected, and then on a search for a new world outlook in which ethics, economics, social structures, politics and religion are all bound together".<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising therefore, that Bharathi too had this all inclusive 'weltanschauung'. Patriotism in his poetry is metamorphosed into a new religion. The poem 'To Liberty' illustrates this. Politics pervaded his entire being. Even in his most subjective personal moments his imagination is firmly rooted in the mundane realities of the world around him—a world of nationalist aspirations, political persecution and subterfuge. Bharathi maintains fluid lines between his personal and public experiences. For instance, while writing of his adolescent love in 'Autobiography', a poem that shows him in one of his intense lyrical moments, he compares his avid anticipation of his loved one, with that of the British spies waiting in stealth for freedom fighters to pass. The intensity of his longing transcends mere adolescent nostalgia and transforms itself into a mature realistic experience. Likewise, in *Kaman Pattu*, 'The Song of Krishna', while dwelling on the image of Lord Krishna as the father, he cannot help but bring vignettes of contemporary political life—of baton charges and prison life. Bharathi's poetic imagination with its simultaneous response to the ethereal and the earthy takes politics in its stride. For he could sing fiery lyrics of resurgent nationalism in the same breath as he sings poems of mysticism. Now if we turn to the Western Romantics, especially the English Romantics we see them as active agents in the spreading of political doctrines. Crane Brinton in *The Political Ideas of the English Romantics* makes the following statement:

In the first place, romanticism as a way of thought is a part of that vast change in men and things, the Revolution, and as such has many links with the political changes of the Revolution. . . . Almost to a man, the English romanticists were actively interested in politics. It is just here that the political opinion of men of letters become especially valuable.

Although Bharathi was, unique in this, among his Indian contemporaries, yet he can easily be assimilated into the world tradition of romantic poetry. Ernst Fischer says, "Romanticism meant rebellion pure and simple, a trumpet call to the people to rise against foreign and homebred oppressors, an appeal to national consciousness, a struggle against feudalism, absolutism and foreign rule. Thus Byron responded to the distant struggle for Greek independence. Shelley felt for the underdog in Ireland, Greece and other parts of the world. He had a passion for reforming the world, to purge the world of exploiters and oppressors

"Kings, priests and statesmen blast the human flower Even in its tender bud; their influence darts Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins of desolate society"

His *Queen Mab* was sweeping in its condemnation of kings, nobles, priests and judges. Like Shelley, Bharathi too was imbued with the spirit of freedom and was equally ecstatic of people in other lands fighting against brute force and tyranny. Bharathi's poem 'New Russia' seems to have been considerably influenced by Shelley's *Ode to Liberty* and Byron's *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte*. The poetic recapturing of scenes of the past in *Isles of Greece*—Don Juan—is present in Bharathi's poem *Endaiyum Thayum*. When Bharathi says, "It was on this land, our mothers as maidens spent moonlit nights in dance and frolic" one finds distinct echoes of the following lines in *Isles of Greece*.

The Isles of Greece, the isles of Greece  
where burning Sappho loved and sung,  
where grew the arts of war and peace  
where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung  
Eternal summer gilds them yet. . . .

Speaking of Byron it may be worthwhile to note that of all the English romanticists he was the one to be held in high esteem in Europe and elsewhere. The German Goethe acclaimed without any reservations that Byron's *Don Juan* was a "work of boundless genius". And Mazzini, himself a man of vision and action, said "Byron gave a European role to English poetry. He led the genius of England on a pilgrimage through Europe". There is no doubt that Byron who was one of the great emancipatory forces of Nineteenth Century Europe, was during the latter part of the Century and even at the beginning of the present Century giving its mood and colour to Indian literature. Perhaps he exerted the widest influence throughout India more than any English poet except Shakespeare. Arabinda



Poddar's graphic account of Byron's influence on Bengali writers is applicable to other parts of India as well. In "Lord Byron and the Literary Renaissance in Bengal" he points out that besides H.L.D. Derozio (1809-1831), the poet leader of 'young Bengal', such outstanding poets and dramatists as Madhusudan Datta, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Hemchandra Bandyopdhyay, Nabinchandra Sen and D.L. Roy were deeply indebted to Byron.<sup>9</sup>

Bharathi's aestheticism drew sustenance from the English Nature Poets, especially John Keats. In *Kuyil Pattu*, 'The Song of Kuyil' (Cuckoo) there are definite traces of his acquaintance with Keats' 'Endymion' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. On this I would like to mention Dr. V. Satchithanandan's perceptive article "Keats, Shakespeare and Bharathi's *Kuyil Pattu*" published in *Essays on Bharathi* (1962).

Bharathi expounds the lines of Keats—"Beauty is truth, truth, beauty" in one of his essays. This is not to maintain that Bharathi's appreciation of beauty was derived from external sources. During the dark period, Indian poets, owing to dire poverty, servitude and ignorance had almost forgotten the concept of beauty. In these circumstances the English romantic poets provided the impetus necessary for Bharathi to re-establish aestheticism in the mainstream of Tamil poetry. Thus in his passionate defence of freedom in all its forms—emancipation of the oppressed, the women, and the underdog, Bharathi's thoughts were penetrated by the same philosophy of expansion and democracy that inspired many European Romanticists. For instance, Shelley, whom as we all know, Bharathi admired and in some ways emulated, expected a great deal from women; not the women of his environment and time, but the new woman like Cythna who was also in Shelley's view the natural woman. Once woman is liberated she would become the most precious of allies. Shelley held that emancipated woman will help reconstruct the glorious new world. It has been pointed out by some scholars that Bharathi's *Puthumai Penn* is an amalgam of Shelley's new woman and the concept of *Shakthi* in the Indian tradition. On the whole it is generally agreed by students of comparative studies that in the pervading lyricism and aestheticism of his poems Bharathi had much in common with the English Romantic poets. Of course it must be remembered that they were not the only ones who enlivened and enlarged his vision.

Besides his voluntarism and the impelling hunger for freedom which were essentially in the realms of feeling and action, Bharathi also imbibed certain modes of literary expression from the Romantic poets, the most productive of them being the lyric. It is a commonplace of aesthetic criticism that lyricism was inseparably connected to European Romantic faith. Hegel in his *Aesthetics* accurately defined its essence:

Lyricism is a kind of basic element of romantic art, the tone in which the epos and drama also speak, and which pervades, like some universal aroma of the soul, even works of the plastic arts<sup>10</sup>.

Bharathi is essentially a lyrical poet. It is his lyrics that afford ample evidence of his greatness as a poet. Walter Pater considered lyric poetry to be "artistically the highest and most complete form of poetry" which is "precise because in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form, without a deduction of something from the matter itself". He felt that the very perfection of such poetry often appears to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding.<sup>11</sup> In his lyrics Bharathi achieved the immediate communication of a dominant emotion; "A stray word or gesture set his imagination afire, and out of the confrontation and explosion emerged a lyric perpetually alive in an orbit of its own". In one of his brilliant lyrical poems, 'Moonlight, stars and the wind' he speaks of poetic inspiration.

Here he comes, the angel of the wind, bringing to my ears the thousand and one sounds of men's life on earth. There is the voice of a bell swinging towards me, a dog barks, a beggar cries piteously for a handful of rice, somebody slams the street door, from the east floats the wailing of a conch, men talk and argue and quarrel, a child weeps—ah, who can count the notes that the wind brings? I sit and weave them all joyously into songs".

These are the concluding lines of a poem that begins with the poet urging his mind-bird to freely float in the sky, to reach out to the far star-cluster, and to speed across space in joyous frenzy. And then almost abruptly the poet listens to "the thousand and one sounds of men's life on earth". In a poem like this we see Bharathi making a voyage of the outer and of the inner world. The noteworthy fact about him is that his feet are firmly planted on the earth and his mind is often "voyaging through strange seas of thought alone". A perfect blend of the two voyages is to be found in his *Gnanaratham*, an allegorical work in prose that combines utopia and reality, bringing into full play the poet's descriptive powers. Here we have the source and strength of his poetry: the unique counterpoint of tumult and peace, of sublimity and mundane, the ethereal flight of the abstracting mind and the physiological responses that constitute the basic substance of the poet's imagination and impulse.

So much for the most salient features of romantic strains in Bharathi's life and poetry. But these and some other features are to be found, naturally enough, in the works of others too. Take for instance the lyric. Although the lyric found its first and best response in Bharathi, a few before him had already begun to prepare the ground. V. G. Suriyanarayana Sastry (1870-1903) had published two volumes of poems in 1901 and 1902. In spite of the very favourable opinion expressed by G. U. Pope who translated the forty-one 'short poems' in the first volume into English, there was little sign of its influence upon the mainstream of poetry in Tamil. The post-Bharathi generation has almost neglected it. The new poetic mood and taste found no place for Sastry. It is true that he broke some new ground in introducing the sonnet—a form eminently suited for lyricism. In fact

in his Preface the author spoke with adoration of Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare as great English poets who had enriched the sonnet adapted from Italian. However as the English translator himself candidly admitted, "these short poems could hardly with propriety be called sonnets". Besides the prosodical and other 'technical' factors which, in the eyes of the translator vitiated the quality of the poems, there wasn't the intense depth of feeling and the free play of imagination leading to special insight or intuitive perception. The interplay of insight and imagination is the predominant feature of Romantic poetry. However Sastriar's second volume showed certain changes. There is in these poems the note of veritable experience. Although the metre and the diction were conventional there was something personal that he was trying to express. The provenance of all the poems were actual experiences: death of his teachers, eminent personages, and close friends; walk on a beach; an evening near the lake; in memory of his mentor; and walk through the city. These had personal reference and meaning to him and did give some "indication of a new departure in Tamil poetry"; but he could never throw off the neo-classical influence upon him. His long rhymed lines were chaste and correct and at time quite expressive of certain moods, but compared to the short lyric measures of Bharathi one feels the absence of a higher musical quality. The value of his work remains chiefly academic and historical.

It is appropriate at this point, to say something of the nature poetry that abounds in Tamil in the modern period and which undoubtedly owes its main inspiration to the English Romanticists. As I mentioned a moment ago we already notice in Sastriar's poetry descriptive pieces that have no precedent for them. I need not dwell on the treatment and interpretation of nature in *Sangam* poetry. Scholars like T. P. Meenakshisundaram, Rev. X. S. Thaninayagam and M. Varadarajan have dealt with it. Clearly, the emphasis of nature in *Sangam* poems is as the necessary and sympathetic background or 'situation' for the human act. Nature has no independent existence on its own merit for its own sake. As Father Thaninayagam has aptly said, "the scenery was changed to keep in harmony with the human sentiments that were dramatized."<sup>12</sup> There was no indulging in nature description nor extolling of nature-rapture. It was as though the luxuriant tropical nature had to be kept under careful control by the human beings. Nature finds an insignificant place and role in the manifestly didactic works of the post-*Sangam* period. It finds an incidental role in the devotional hymns of Sambandhar in whom 'divine' nature generated the poetic spark and brought about the instant incandescence. But generally speaking the *bhakti* poets were animated by Puranic mythology rather than by natural scenery. The place of natural scenery in the epics is purely functional and in late medieval literature nature virtually disappears. Therefore the appearance of nature poetry in twentieth century Tamil is almost entirely due to the Western impact. And in this the influence of the Romanticists was of cardinal importance.

At about the time when Suriyanarayana Sastriar published his 'short poems' *Poets' Feast* (1902)—Subramania Bharathi began writing his first poems: *Thanimai irakkam* 'Sorrow in Loneliness', *Yan 'I'* and *Chandrihai*, 'Moonlight'. These, too, were sonnets. At first sight, these poems appear to be no different from those of Sastriar. Here is late Nineteenth Century elitist subject-matter, bookish and literary. The familiar features of scholastic style and form—archaisms of Vocabulary and syntax, conventional epithets, stock allusions and metrical patterns—that were to be seen in current works. For instance, the poem *Chandrihai* begins with the word 'yanar' meaning freshness, goodness, fertility and new income. It is part of the *Sangam* diction. Young Bharathi himself must have given some thought about its usage. For in a footnote he has given a gloss; *yanar* means beauty. The Wordsworthian inspiration is evident. And yet a second glance at these early specimens gives an inkling of Bharathi's poetic craft. We get the impression that a more subtle process than the mere reproduction or worse, imitation of certain models is involved in his art. As Periyasami Thooran observed, already we can see Bharathi's poetic fire sparkling in these poems. Considering the totality of his work it is quite clear that Bharathi did not engage himself in pure descriptive poetry. Both in his lyrics and in the longer poems like *Kuyil Pattu* and *Panchali Sabatham* are interspersed exquisite passages exhibiting great power. And in these passages, the mature poet absorbs and re-creates some imageries and descriptions of English nature poets. I shall limit myself to one single illustration. Towards the end of the first canto in *Panchali Sabatham* the Pandavas are on their way to Hastinapura at the invitation of Dryodana. During the journey while resting, Arjuna takes Draupadi for an evening walk. Under the pretext of adhering to the epical requirement of describing the sun set, Bharathi allows Arjuna describe with the minuteness of a painter, "the modifications of effect as the sun goes down and the lights change." The passage shows Bharathi in one of his inspired moments. Not satisfied with his poetic portraiture he has added a prose description in the notes. While reading this glorious passage one is suddenly reminded of "An Evening Walk". The corresponding passage in Wordsworth's poem runs as follows:

How pleasant, as the sun declines, to view  
 The spacious landscape change in form and hue!  
 Here, vanish, as in mist, before a flood  
 Of bright obscurity, hill, lawn, and wood;  
 There, objects by the searching beams betrayed  
 Come forth, and here retire in purple shade;  
 Even the white stems of birch, the cottage white,  
 Soften their glare before the mellow light;  
 The skiffs, at anchor where with umbrage wide  
 Yon chestnuts half the latticed boat-house hide,  
 Shed from their sides, that face the sun's slant beam,  
 Strong flakes of radiance on the tremulous stream.



To a careful observer Bharathi's evocatory passage will be oddly reminiscent but not all an echo of Wordsworth's poem. After Bharathi, nature poems have become regular subjects. Indeed hardly any volume of poetry comes out without containing a section 'on nature'. Such is the insistence on landscape as a subject—an important subject—for our poets that one has to remind oneself that the idea should be traced back to the English nature poets. In passing it may be noted, that the English nature poets had an original advantage which our moderns lack. Wordsworth and his contemporaries had a tradition of nature poetry before them and what is more crucial, were able to draw from the landscape painting of their day. The parallel that comes to my mind in the Tamil literary tradition, is one of an earlier time and belonging to a different context—the poetry of the *Bhakthi* poets whose descriptions of feminine figures were matched by the temple sculptures of their time.

Besides the Romantic poems on nature there were also other influences at work. The American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) wielded a considerable influence on the poetry of Bharathi. Bharathi was probably among the first of the Indian poets to experiment with *vers libre*. He says in his essay on Whitman<sup>13</sup> "What is novel about the poetry of Walt Whitman is that it resembles prose in style. It is devoid of rhyme, alliteration and such poetic devices. Many poetical works belonging to the great languages of the world are in blank verse. Free verse is rare. Whitman believed that the meaning of poetry was in words, not in rhyme and therefore he wrote free verse, retaining only the rhythmic beauty of the language. In Europe he is considered equal to such great poets as Shakespeare, Milton, Dante and Goethe. Europeans treat him as one of the prophets of democracy. He is a *Mahan*, most distinguished seer, who fearlessly preaches the great truth that all are equal—men, women, and children." Sri Aurobindo was equally, if not more, laudatory in his remarks about Whitman. Here again we see the close resemblance in views between Bharathi and Aurobindo. In his "The Future Poetry" Aurobindo refers to Whitman several times in connexion with new trends in European and American poetry.

"Whitman's aim is consciously, clearly, professedly to make a great revolution in the whole method of poetry and if anybody could have succeeded it ought to have been this giant of poetic thought with his energy of diction, this spiritual crowned athlete and vital prophet of democracy, liberty and soul of man and Nature and all humanity. He is a great poet, one of the greatest in the power of his substance, the energy of his vision, the force of his style, the largeness at once of his personality and his universality."<sup>14</sup>

Rarely has Aurobindo lavished such praise on any one. Like Bharathi he too calls him a prophet of democracy and one of the greatest poets.

But while Whitman rejected metre as the vestige of feudalism, Bharathi never abandoned metre consciously. Metre was never regarded by him as a restraint on his poetic genius. On the contrary, Bharathi infused new vigour into traditional

metres and used them to suit his intention. However, Bharathi experimented with folk metres such as *Sindhu* and *Kanni*, thereby capturing in his verse the vibrancy and earthiness of the folk tradition. He extolled the elements of democracy, freedom and equality of the sexes found in Whitman's poetry. The pan-American vision of Whitman inspired in Bharathi a pan-Indian vision. *Bharatha Desam* 'The Indian Nation' reminds a reader of Whitman's "Starting from Paumanak". Bharathi spans the length and breadth of India—from the snowy Himalayas to Cape Comorin—from Bengal to Indus in the same manner as Whitman covers the expansive United States. Likewise in *Thayin Manikkodi*, 'Flag of Motherland' one can see the influence of Whitman's "Song of the Banner at Daybreak".

Industry and manual labour are given pride of place by Bharathi. His several pieces on industry and labour can be paralleled with the Labor Songs of Whitman and the poems of the Belgian poet Verhaeren. Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916) foremost Belgian poet and art critic seems to have inspired Bharathi. It is almost likely that he had read him in French, a language he knew. For at that time Verhaeren was not translated into English and consequently was not widely known in the British colonies, let alone in Britain itself. In one of his essays Bharathi summarised Verhaeren's view thus: "Strength is beauty, beauty strength—the machine, the factory, the steam engine, the steamship, the air plane, the large cannon—everything is beautiful. Beauty is not determined by the external shape and form of things; Machines are powerful and hence there is inherent beauty in them". It is interesting to speculate as to what drew him toward the Belgian poet.<sup>16</sup> Judging by his comments on Whitman (and despite certain difference in expression, there is remarkably close spiritual resemblance between Whitman and Verhaeren) it is probably that he liked his spirit of democracy. There were other aspects too that would have appealed to Bharathi. "Verhaeren accepted the poet's 'mission' as a personal responsibility and used his art to prove that he possessed the urgent sympathies, the partialities and convictions that belong to the critic and reformer of society..... Verhaeren arrives at an aesthetic appreciation of energy in the fullness and variety of its contemporary manifestations. His vision of Energy as the divine afflatus and characteristic beauty of the modern world, had for him the value of a redemptive illumination. .... Energy is the regnant fact of today, the pregnant formula for to-morrow. Primary and most extensive of the eternal ideas, it is apparent on all sides, here disseminated in hands, arms, torsos, there unified in a serene and dominant brain. .... For good or evil it is the driving power of all human effort. And beyond mankind, it vibrates throughout the material universe from the atom to the star".<sup>17</sup>

Verhaeren's originality was in the discovery of a "new beauty" in the industrial, urban world: strength, speed, size, fervour, will, ugliness, in short all the attributes of cities attracted him and constituted the substance of his poetry. To Bharathi who was striving to formulate a new aesthetic, Verhaeren's ideas must have been exhilarating. Bharathi says that men's conception of beauty is subject to evolution

and varies greatly at different epochs. European poets had erred in shunning the new reality of contemporary life. Bharathi was, in spite of the squalor and degradation of his country, an optimist. His optimism was born out of his deep religiosity and the Vedantic vision of the eternal harmony of the soul. Consequently when most of his contemporaries grew "ever more lifeless and languid, evermore secluded and disheartened, his voice grew ever more resonant and vigorous, like and organ indeed, full of reverence and the mystical power of sublime prayer".<sup>17</sup>

Bharathi's attraction for industry goes beyond a mere aesthetic appreciation of strength. It is interesting to note that in Tamil "*Shakti*" denotes not only the mother Goddess whom Bharathi worshipped but power as well. Bharathi saw *Shakti*—the moving force behind the universe—personified in the power of the machines. Since he saw in *Kali* not only the destructive force, but the creative and life sustaining force as well, it was easy for him to identify with machines—the symbol of power on earth—positive values of growth and development. He foresaw industry creating a new society, giving birth to a new epoch. In his characteristic manner, he links this idea with the main-stream of Indian myths and symbols and elevates the workers to the status of creators *par excellence*, the counterparts of Brahma, the Creator, the "living gods" on earth. Whatever his philosophical inclinations were and they were very important for him, his response was basically lyrical. "Lyricism is a kind of basic element of romantic art"<sup>18</sup> and Bharathi is essentially a lyrical poet.

Once again one is reminded of Verhaeren. The sweep of the various sights and impressions kaleidoscopic in character was a technique Verhaeren used very effectively. Zweig's observation on Verhaeren is apt, "The poem surrenders itself to every feeling, every rhythm, every melody; it adapts itself, distends; with its foaming voluptuous joy it can fold in its embrace the illimitable length and breadth of cities, can contract to pick up the loveliness of one fallen blossom, can imitate the thundering voice of the street, the hammering of the machines, and the whispering of lovers in a garden of spring. The poem can now speak in all languages of feeling, with all the voices of men; for the tortured moaning cry of an individual has become the voice of the universe. Only such a pantheistic feeling could create this intimate relationship between the world of self and the world surrounding self, the relationship which subsequently ends in an unparalleled identity".<sup>19</sup>

After examining the conditions under which he lived, suffered and worked, we come to the interesting problem of literary judgement; what is the relation between a writer's own personal sympathies and his literary achievement. In other words, how do we judge a writer? Is there an easy equation between his beliefs and his creations? The problem is a perennial one and is full of significance to our own times. I think Bharathi too poses this question. Although he was a Brahmin by birth, a staunch believer in God and religion, an idealist in philosophy, a pacifist in nature, and an individualist to the core, he has sung poems repudiating

every one of these. His subjective inclinations did not prevent him from perceiving the actual conditions around him and portraying them with accuracy and authenticity. In other words, in the case of Bharathi his realistic vision triumphed over his inert beliefs. My own feeling is that Bharathi's grasp of the essence of real historical process and social dynamics is the result of his artistic sincerity; they have found a place in his poems in spite of his conscious views.

Perhaps we should also consider the milieu in which he lived. He was particularly lucky in his times. While the impact of British rule was increasingly being felt and a pale imitative middle-class was emerging, there was still much of the old traditions that were sufficient to nourish a person who could get to their core. Bharathi was deeply rooted in the mores of his people and was never remote from them; and yet as a result of his self-acquired education (he never completed any formal examinations) could see his society and himself objectively. He could compose the most intricate forms of traditional—oral—poetry and at the same time maintain a 'journal' and write personal notes. Neither his education nor his knowledge of foreign languages distorted his personality. He shared with the readers and listeners of his poetry the mythologies, historical references, literary allusions and folk-motifs that gave a consensus between him and them. In one sense he was with them and in another without. As a result of this unique combination he displays a brilliance, energy and variety surpassing all other contemporaries. George Steiner's remarks on Shakespeare seem applicable here, "Thus Shakespeare could draw at will on medieval and modern, on the intricate weave of tradition and the forward motion of intellect. Many of his primary devices and conventions rely on this simultaneity of impulse".<sup>20</sup> By a similar process Bharathi succeeded in altering the landscape of our awareness by presenting the ancient and modern as if these had been lurking just under the smooth surface. His achievement ushered in Tamil literature into the mainstream of world writing. In being essentially national he transcended nationalistic boundaries and evolved as a truly universal poet.<sup>21</sup>

#### Notes

1. *The Necessity of Art* (Pelican Books) London, 1963. p. 53.
2. Jacques Barzun, *Classic, Romantic and Modern*, New York, 1961, p. 98.
3. *Ibid.* p. 99.
4. Amaury De Riencourt, *The Soul of India*, London, 1961. p. 290.
5. Buddhadeva Bose *An Acre of Green Grass*, Calcutta, 1948. pp. 60-61.
6. The pathetic state of traditional Tamil scholarship during the 18th and 19th Centuries is vividly described in an article in the *Siddhanta Deepika* (Nov. 1897). "Within our own times we know of a whole class of Pandits who neither knew nor heard of any of these Idylls except the first Tirumurugarrupadai, which, as part of the XL Book of Saiva lore, has even been popular,



though not well learnt and understood by all. When *Maturaikkanchi* was first introduced as a text for the B.A. Examination of 1894, we know of even Pandits of first grade Colleges who were grumbling and murmuring against it. We know also of some cases in which some Pandits, who owned stray copies (Mss.) of some of these Idyls, gave up in despair all hopes of deciphering what the nature of their contents were. Even in print now, these are only bitter cups in the hands of some of the otherwise able scholars”.

7. *A History of Realism*, Moscow, 1973. pp. 75-7.
8. Riencourt, op.cit. pp. 296-298.
9. *Indian Literature* (Proceedings of a Seminar) ed. Arabinda Poddar, Simla, 1972. pp. 116-124.
10. Quoted by Suchkov, op. cit. p. 76.
11. Walter Pater, “The School of Giorgione” in *The Renaissance* (Modern Library Edition) pp. 110-111.
12. Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, *Landscape and Poetry*, (2nd edn.) Bombay, 1966. p. 139.
13. Quoted by V. Satchithanandan in *Tamil Culture*, Vol. IX. No. 4 p. 350.
14. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 9. p. 149.
15. P. Mansell Jones, *Emile Verhaeren — A Study in the Development of his Art and Ideas*, London, 1926. pp. 93-97.
16. Ibid.,
17. Stefan Zweig, *Emile Verhaeren*, London, 1915. pp. 74-77.
18. Boris Suchkov, op. cit., p. 76
19. Stefan Zweig, op. cit., p. 77.
20. *Language and Silence*, New York, 1967. p. 202.
21. A somewhat similar assessment of Hu Shih by an American scholar seems interesting. “Born in 1891 in a small village in Anhwei province in eastern China, it was still not too late for him to have a traditional upbringing and education. Unlike many Chinese intellectuals of later generations it could never be said of him that he was ignorant of or alienated from his own cultural heritage. He was, thus, never at a disadvantage in academic jousts with even the most conservative Confucian scholars; he was ever prepared to match quotations from the Classics and the commentaries with the most erudite of pundits. He was at ease in the realm of Western history, literature, and thought. These two cultural traditions, the Chinese and the Western, did not constitute separate and distinct sectors of his mind but were rather integrated into a philosophical whole. It becomes immediately apparent to the reader of his works that he never suffers from cultural parochialism or strident nationalism”. Hyman Kublin in Introduction to the Second Edition of Hu Shih’s *The Chinese Renaissance*. New York, 1963.

## CRIME AND PREVENTION IN NINETEEN CENTURY NORTH CEYLON (SRI LANKA)

BERTRAM BASTIAMPILLAI

Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the nineteenth century was relatively a peaceful possession of the British. There were "revolts" but they were quelled, and these protests had been from the central highlands. North Ceylon was calm and comparatively a quiet area. The British who found the administering the island an expensive exercise were not too anxious to maintain any costly machinery for enforcing law and order. To keep the troops was itself a burden, and, therefore, they did not bother about a police force for the passive Northern province where the Government Agent was the 'Rajah' of his domain.

Without an effective organisation to detect crimes and systematically apprehend criminals in the early and mid nineteenth centuries the Government Agent was responsible for ensuring security, peace and order within the limits of his province. This was a vital function of the provincial administrator for, since the beginning of British administration, during a period of thirty or forty years, gang robbery had increased in North Ceylon and caused much mischief.<sup>1</sup> The headman, who had been earlier responsible for maintaining law and order, although expected to continue performing their duties in enforcing law and order, on the contrary, appeared to aid the robbers.<sup>2</sup> This was because the quality of the headmen and their calibre had fallen low.

Later on, however, mainly under Government Agent, P. A. Dyke (1829-1867) the numbers of headmen gradually reduced and only competent and respectable officials were chosen to positions of headmen. They acted more firmly and conscientiously and the numbers of the robber gangs decreased. Further, as more roads were built following the efforts of

Dyke to improve the facilities for communication, transport and travel many of these habitual robbers were apprehended and were meted out deterrent punishment. But when Jaffna town itself became unsafe, the criminals migrated into the interior areas of the Vanni or the remoter parts of the district where they continued indulging in acts of depredation.<sup>3</sup>

In the other parts of the island, the government had introduced a police system but Jaffna lacked one and crime could not be easily suppressed during the early years of the 19th century. Idleness, drunkenness and gambling commonly accounted for this increase in crime.<sup>4</sup> A police force in North Ceylon had hence become essential, but in Jaffna the Government Agent stubbornly insisted that there was no need for a regular police force.

From the islands, off Jaffna peninsula, and from some ports in North Ceylon there was extensive smuggling in contraband like opium.<sup>5</sup> Another common offence was encroachment on crown property and on private property. Complaints regarding encroachments were regular and numerous.<sup>6</sup> Palmyrah palm timber was highly priced in India. Palms were felled and stolen by merchants and complaints concerning this illicit activity had been several from the mainland and offshore islands.<sup>7</sup> Moreover the majority of the inhabitants who were small scale cultivators, suffered constant loss owing to the damage caused to their garden produce in villages like Neervely and Kopay.<sup>8</sup>

Since there were several facilities for smuggling with impunity, the Government Agent suggested paying rewards to "informers" who could help the government to detect the culprits.<sup>9</sup> This scheme was approved in April 1833.<sup>10</sup>

A category of a headman called police **Vidanes** were also employed in attending to police duties.<sup>11</sup> But quite often the service these police **vidanes** provided was unsatisfactory. The Government Agent realised that these police **vidanes** were not maintaining a proper system of regular patrols,<sup>12</sup> Consequently several offences were being committed and complaints were too many.<sup>13</sup>

The tradition of indulging in crime had been common during the time of early British rule. In 1830, the Chief Justice, Sir Richard Ottley, commenting about crime to the CelebrookesCameron Commission concluded that the inhabitants of North Ceylon were using their slaves for committing depredations on the property of others,<sup>14</sup> Moreover, since the evidence of slaves was admissible in court, the crime of perjury was commonly committed by slaves on the instigation of their masters.<sup>15</sup> The rather common offences in North Ceylon were the theft of cattle, especially in the interior, forgery, frauds and the cutting off of ears for stealing ornaments.<sup>16</sup> The latter type of crime was peculiar to the Tamil regions of the North and East Ceylon. The inhabitants adorned their ears with expensive jewellery, and in spite of severe punishments meted out by the supreme court the robbing the ear rings could not be checked.<sup>17</sup>

In 1835, the District Judge of Mannar district observed that thefts and breaches of the peace following excessive indulgence in drinking were frequent.<sup>18</sup> The facility for obtaining toddy was unrestricted - there were two hundred toddy booths within a small area. Liquor was so freely sold and the number of drunkards and idlers were large. The Judge suggested that as a beneficial and necessary measure in the interests of the welfare of society that restrictions needed to be imposed on the provision for buying toddy.<sup>19</sup> A scheme whereby licenses may be issued on the payment of a sum of money for tapping toddy from a limited number of palms was mooted and sales of liquor were to be channeled through a restricted number of retail dealers. Such restraints would also help in conserving the palmyrah fruit which was a source of food normally of the poorer folk. Indiscriminate and unlimited use of the palms for obtaining toddy had diminished a valuable source of sustenance. The Governor inquired from Dyke, the Government Agent, whether an unrestricted sale of alcohol had similar ill-effects in Jaffna as in Mannar.<sup>20</sup> He wanted to control the sale of toddy in North Ceylon making it a dutiable article, as in the Southern, Western and Central provinces. However, this suggestion was not welcomed and no restrictions on the sale of liquor were imposed.<sup>21</sup>

Later in 1864, in referring to the association of inebriation, and crime the Government Agent commented that in the Jaffna peninsula, unlike in Mannar, the population was largely Hindu and did not habitually consume liquor.<sup>22</sup> In the island of Kayts, however, where there were a large number of Roman Catholics liquor was commonly consumed and there was more crime: hence a Magistrate was needed to maintain peace there.<sup>23</sup>

In Nuwarakalavia, a Sinhalese district attached to the Tamil Northern province a category of headman called *kariakarawansa*, were authorised in 1840 to act as police officers in their village divisions.<sup>24</sup> But there was still a need for a regular police force because lawlessness in villages persisted as the authority of the headmen proved to be ineffective. In fact at one time "generally speaking, wherever there was crime, the headmen had a hand in it".<sup>25</sup> This was true, Yet, Nuwarakalaviya had no police officer till 1896.<sup>26</sup> The Government was so slow in establishing a force to maintain law and order.

As early as 1843, the imposition of an assessment in Jaffna for utilising the income from it for establishing a police force had been mooted.<sup>27</sup> The government was unable to defray from the general revenue the cost of a police establishment. The expenses of it had therefore to be met by special taxation, or some such levy.<sup>28</sup> Governor Colin Campbell (1831-47) was also determined to establish an effective police system in the interior areas.<sup>29</sup> The increase in crime called for serious attention and numerous deficiencies existed in the manner in which rural areas were being policed, and in the way police *vidanes* were functioning.<sup>30</sup>

The Government Agents were hence required to report on the conditions of the police system in villages in their areas and on measures for improving it.<sup>31</sup> If changes were to be made and they were imperative, the Agents were also to propose the manner whereby the additional expenses required for making policing more effective could be obtained,

But the Government Agent disagreed. There was sufficient security provided for life and property in the villages of the Northern province.<sup>32</sup> In his classic report of August 1844,<sup>33</sup> he pointed out that, unlike in the Sinhalese provinces of the South, in North Ceylon crime had greatly decreased,<sup>34</sup> in the years following the establishment of British rule.

By the mid 'forties' gang robberies had become less frequent, while the despicable crime of cutting off ears for robbing ornaments had almost disappeared.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the gang robberies needed to be totally stopped. They were similar to the type of crime in South India than to the sort of offences common in the Sinhalese areas. But, savage and cruel murders, highway robberies and brutal assaults were now noticeably rarer in the Northern province.<sup>36</sup>

This decrease in crime was owing to the measures the Government Agent had introduced for improving the system of police *vidanes*. Although the number of police *vidanes* had been reduced the quality of these officials had been improved with more efficient supervision and other salutary changes.<sup>37</sup> The headmen of the superior grade, the *maniagers*, too had been often connected with serious crime in the past. They had screened criminals from arrest and obstructed the judicial process by exercising undue influence. They themselves were been involved in acts of terrorism, sometime maintaining their own undesirable gangs. The Government Agent had therefore effected improvements in the *maniagar* system too in 1831.<sup>38</sup>

Now, only a few of the next grade of headmen, the *udaiyars*, seemed to have some connection with the criminals. Dyke had been for long urging on the government a need for improving the lot of this type of headmen too. In 1832, therefore changes had been introduced for improving the character of these headmen: and they were now paid regular salaries. Since then, most *udaiyars* also had improved.<sup>39</sup>

The Agent finally suggested that fairer remuneration should be paid to police *vidanes*; and that endeavours should be made for increasing the self-respect of these officers.<sup>40</sup> For providing a better police service through the medium of these headmen by paying them responsible emoluments a rate could be levied on the houses in a village.<sup>41</sup> But the Government Agent clearly and consistently saw no need for a regular police establishment in the North.<sup>42</sup>

In the mannar district in 1834<sup>43</sup> there had been six police *vidanes* in charge of the different divisions. Later both in the Mannar and Vann districts the number of police *vidanes* was increased. These districts, largely composed of vast jungle tracts, provided secure hide-outs for undesirables. Hence, a larger police *vidane* establishment was required here, especially, where jungle lay adjacent to the inhabited parts. But the principal difficulty in these parts lay again in finding personnel suitable for police work without the provision for proper remuneration.<sup>44</sup>

However, although the Agent recognized no need for a regular police force in North Ceylon and was convinced that he could maintain security peace and order through the services of headmen there were instances of



trouble. In December 1848, the police *vidane* of Vannarponnai divisions complained to the Magistrate that his deceased's son's body had been disinterred and it had been decapitated alleging that a notorious "native doctor" and his family practising witchcraft were responsible for this deed.<sup>45</sup> In the next year, a similar complaint was lodged against the same suspects.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, in 1844 and thereafter, whenever the police system was to be reorganised, the Government Agent had been adamant that within his province crime was not increasing, but had decreased. Therefore, a regular police force was unnecessary.<sup>47</sup>

A common and widely prevalent crime was the illicit removal of timber after surreptitiously felling tree on government lands. To counter this crime, the Government Agent had recommended that ten percent from income derived from licenses issued for felling and removing timber from state lands should be paid to the headmen. Given such an incentive headmen would be more enthusiastic in protecting the trees on government land.<sup>48</sup> The proposal was accepted and in 1854 the Government Agent was also authorised to reward those who furnished information regarding irregularities practised while felling timber.<sup>49</sup>

But the most baffling of the problems to be handled was cattle theft. It was so widespread and common in certain interior parts of the Northern province. In 1836, therefore, Ordinance No. 5 was enacted to stem the increase in cattle stealing. The number of offences became alarming. The Supreme Court, meeting periodically, was an inadequate instrument for dealing with an evil which was so widespread in remote areas and speedy apprehension and trial of the culprits were essential. Hence, headmen were required to report cases of cattle theft and if they failed to comply with this order headmen were penalised by a fine of five pounds sterling and three months of imprisonment. Thus the responsibility to check this crime was given over to headmen. The unauthorised slaughter of cattle was also prohibited as yet another step for checking this offence. There were several complaints of this crime, made to the Government Agent and District Judges especially from areas in Nuwarakalaviya. Cattle provided the peasants with the means for their livelihood and loss of cattle almost economically crippled the poor cultivators.

But as complaints kept on recurring, A.C. Brodie, a civil servant was specially appointed a Justice of the Peace for the Eastern, Northern and North Western provinces to inquire only into the rampant cases of cattle lifting in remote regions such as Nuwarakalaviya, Tamankaduwa and the Seven Korales.<sup>50</sup> After a summary investigation he could commit cases for trial by the Supreme Court. In spite of the various preventive measures taken still there were numerous complaints about losses of cattle, especially from outlying areas, and it had been difficult to bring offenders to justice owing to long distances which the owners of cattle and witnesses repeatedly had to traverse to reach the town where alone investigations were conducted.<sup>51</sup> Representations against cattle stealing came mainly from the Southern division of Nuwarakalaviya. Therefore in 1848, Brodie, an intelligent, active

official was chosen to be a Justice of the Peace who was to journey from place to place for inquiring into these crimes on the spot itself. If summary punishment could not be imposed the complainants would have to call hereafter only once at the sessions of the court in town, and if they had travelled over twenty-five miles expenses incurred by them were reimbursed. Brodie's enterprise brought immediately a considerable decline in this crime,<sup>62</sup> but he observed, cautiously and shrewdly, 'The cattle stealers are by far the most intelligent people in the counryt'<sup>63</sup> He was correct indeed.

In March 1849 when the Government Agent visited the interior districts he was again inundated with representations about the universal prevalence of the crime of stealing cattle.<sup>64</sup> Summary inquiries in the villages revealed immediately that there had been a theft of three head of cattle,<sup>65</sup> and during three years in one village alone thirty-seven animals had been lost.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, in another village, the main complaint referred to the loss of cattle. The losses of animals had considerably increased since 1843, and the villagers explained their difficulties if they were to go to court for redress.<sup>67</sup> It entailed expenditure, loss of time and absence from fields and homesteads. In spite of appointing the itinerant judge to deal with this type of crime, the Government Agent was taken aback when he was pestered with so many complaints, and at every village.

Therefore, in April 1849, on representations from the Government Agent the District Judge of Anuradhapura was instructed by the Government to proceed to the Southern part of Nuwarakalaviya for inquiries into cases of cattle stealing.<sup>68</sup> He was also required to record the names, connections, places of abode and practices of the parties suspected of being engaged in this crime. A general report on cattle theft was to be despatched to the Government Agent.<sup>69</sup>

Brodie's report outlining the cases of cattle stealing at Anuradhapura was forwarded to Dyke,<sup>70</sup> the Government Agent. The Assistant Agent of Nuwarakalaviya, J.T. Tranchell, was also ordered to proceed forthwith into remote areas and to assist effectively in checking the occurrence of these thefts.<sup>71</sup> The Queen's Advocate had observed that the crime had not only been carried on extensively, but also openly.<sup>72</sup> Brodie's action, it was anticipated, would prove to be beneficial in arresting this criminal activity which was "... an organised system of theft, connived at, if not participated in, by the local Headmen".<sup>73</sup>

In the same year, in May the Agent again toured Nuwarakalaviya mainly to gain more information about that crime.<sup>74</sup> He was interested in discovering the extent to which this crime was widespread and frequent, in devising measures for repressing thefts, and in arriving at recommendations and measures for ending this evil.<sup>75</sup>

The Southern division of Nuwarakalaviya district was bounded on the South by Matale and the Seven Korales. This district consisted of three divisions under the supervision of *ratemahatmayas*. Fifty four cases of thefts of cattle had

taken place in the area alone within twelve months preceding May 1849. <sup>66</sup> The "thieves" had perfected their system of operation-cattle were driven off to a distance for disposal; but the real and ultimate intention of the culprits was to extort money from the owners of the animals as a fee for finding "lost" cattle and returning them. This crime was rapidly and generally increasing; and unsavoury elements within villages preyed on their neighbours. <sup>67</sup> Victims were deterred from complaining to the courts because it entailed expense and delay. Their experience made them reluctant to request aid from headmen, who had been unhelpful in either detecting offenders or recovering lost property. Obviously, the headmen too were involved. The offence was particularly rampant within the seven **Korales** and in areas adjacent to Matala. The villagers, therefore, requested the government to take special cognisance of their miserable position and to afford them relief. <sup>68</sup>

After this study and survey, Government Agent, Dyke, reported to the Government that the crime was very common. <sup>69</sup> Furthermore, it was increasing and spreading into areas where such thefts had before been rare. The villagers lived in fear feeling insecure about their property. Following the losses in cattle, cultivation had suffered and might further decline if this crime continued to be unchecked. The inhabitants harboured an intolerable grievance against the government and had abandoned ideas of resorting to court or to the police or to headmen; the police and the headmen had forfeited the confidence of the villagers. <sup>70</sup> The manner in which cattle stealing prevailed indicated that the practice had been recently introduced from the Seven **Korales**, and had later spread gradually southwards and eastwards. <sup>71</sup>

The Government Agent realised that it was an extraordinary situation and that measures for dealing with it hence had to be exceptional. Comprehensive powers to settle the cases summarily had to be provided to the District Judge who had to be authorised to decide cases in any part of the district, and even be empowered to try cases in any of the districts adjoining his own area of jurisdiction. <sup>72</sup> Additionally, the concession to bail out offenders needed to be reduced; the requirement of written affidavits had to be dispensed with and if the evidence of the owners of cattle was essential they should not be subjected to expenditure or delays. A Supreme Court of one circuit should be empowered to try cases of another circuit. <sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, headmen who did not report cases of cattle thefts to court were to be punished; those who informed owners of cattle of thefts thereby hoping to extort a reward were to be penalised; removal of cattle from area to area was to be made an offence; and police headmen should compulsorily serve for a specified period in an area. <sup>74</sup> But already, the posts of police headmen were constantly abandoned in Nuwarakalaviya, since none valued such offices. Now, if they were expected to work under stricter conditions and demands none may accept office at all. Therefore, if police headmen were required to function compulsorily for a stipulated period they had to be remunerated or even otherwise these officials needed to be paid. <sup>75</sup>

The Government now designed an Ordinance prohibiting the removal or bringing in of cattle between sunset and sunrise. <sup>76</sup> Jurors felt such a deterrent measure would be expedient. Also as several people in the villages had complained of the innumerable liquor shops, the jurors thought that if the majority of the inhabitants of an area did not desire it, facilities for the sale of liquor should not be provided. The Chief Justice too agreed that this was a reasonable suggestion. <sup>77</sup> Apparently, cattle thieving, crime and drinking were interlinked.

Accordingly, in October 1850 an Ordinance was enacted to provide for the more effectual suppression of cattle stealing in the interior as a measure of the greatest urgency and importance. <sup>78</sup> Cattle stealing was not a mere common crime. It affected poorer people in a practical way. As a result of this crime there was a total disorganisation of society in some areas; there was no law, the strongest was right and the weak were helpless. Month after month, the same complaint had been repeatedly lodged; and clearly thousands could get no redress for this one grievance. The out-cry against this crime and for measures to combat it has been universally exclaimed within the interior regions from the important district of Nuwarakalaviya where the crime was being extensively and systematically committed. <sup>79</sup>

Up to 1851, moreover, the offence could be tried only by the Supreme Court, which was an unsatisfactory arrangement. Therefore, the Governor transferred the authority for trying such cases from the Supreme Courts to the local District Courts. The Supreme Court had been ineffective in dealing with this dereliction. It met at the town, away from areas where the offence was common, and also so infrequently that speedy trials or immediate action was impossible; and as there was so much uncertainty about the outcome at such trials the Supreme Court had not exercised any lasting effect in suppressing this wave of crime. Hence, peremptory justice was to be meted out. <sup>80</sup> With a grant of jurisdiction to try these cases of cattle theft to the District Courts, Ordinance No. 6 of 1850 was expected to provide a more effectual means of combating this crime.

Nevertheless, cattle thefts continued unabated. Several representations from the Government Agent and other officials about the state of the districts of the Seven **Korales**, Nuwarakalaviya, and Matale had principally referred to the depredations caused by cattle thieves. <sup>81</sup> The Governor and the Executive Council, therefore, turned their attention once again to this serious problem. An active official was to be immediately assigned to those districts as Justice of the Peace, with his headquarters at Dambulla. A few efficient police officers were to assist in apprehending criminals to be produced for trial. Thus, a stipendiary Justice of the Peace was appointed from January 1855 assisted by an interpreter and four police officers. <sup>82</sup> Largely, because of the interest and energy exhibited by the Justice of the Peace, A. Y. Adams, there was forthwith a noticeable decrease of thefts.

In July 1855, the Governor again warned that if the headmen or the rate mahatmayas of any particular division where cattle stealing prevailed aroused reasonable suspicion of themselves conniving in such crimes, those officials were to be summarily dismissed. <sup>83</sup> This sort of drastic action was expected to do good;

and the higher and the more important the official selected for summary punishment the better would it serve as an example to the others.<sup>8</sup> The Government was further convinced that as they pecuniarily benefited, headmen were accomplices in the crime. Furthermore, where cattle stealing prevailed and the Government could detect no evidence to incriminate the culprits or could not apprehend them, the *ratemahatmayas* of the divisions were unworthy of the government's confidence and their inefficiency afforded ample justification for dismissal.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, in January 1858, a *ratemahatmaya* was retired owing to his inability to assist in repressing cattle stealing and lawlessness.<sup>10</sup> Further, District Judges came to be more energetic in promptly disposing cases of cattle theft, and they act suitably to deter the increasing incidence of this offence.<sup>11</sup>

In 1859, the passing of Ordinance No. 41 however proved how futile had been the attempts in the long run to check cattle stealing.<sup>12</sup> Cattle theft was as rife as it had always been in Nuwarakalaviya when R. W. Morris was appointed additional assistant agent in 1861. Morris was able to curb the occurrence of thefts suddenly, but not for long as Brodie had done so ten years ago. He "sentenced offenders to lashes and from being the plague of the country, cattle stealing became unknown."<sup>13</sup> This crime remained a lure to law breakers and only severe punishment with lashes appeared effective in restraining offenders;<sup>14</sup> but not for long.

Meanwhile by 1851, the question of establishing a police force at Jaffna came to the fore again. A European planter, R. J. Dunlop, drew the Governor's attention to the unprotected state of the Northern province, particularly of the Jaffna town, which lay at the mercy of bands of ruffians and thieves.<sup>15</sup> Thefts and robberies were frequent, and if delinquents were caught there were none to take them into custody, nor could they be securely confined. Within the past five years alone his house in Jaffna had been burgled eight times, but the culprits were not detected and the lost goods were not recovered.<sup>16</sup> He added that "... we are nearly as bad having a kind of Police Officer called *vidahns*..."<sup>17</sup> who were unpaid and held their appointments by favour. Consequently they just did what pleased them, and when at their stations, which was rare, they were so careless in discharging their duties, and were almost useless. In every case of robbery, committed in their district Dunlop alleged that they were aware of the thieves, either before or after the offence, but they showed no zeal in performing the service "except where they do not receive their share of the plunder as blackmail".<sup>18</sup> Dunlop emphasised the need for establishing a good paid police force in the town and the country and added that respectable inhabitants would consent to be taxed for the provision of it because he had heard, "daily on all sides nothing but complaints on this subject".<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to this view was the official attitude. The Colonial Secretary, advised by the Government Agent, did not agree with Dunlop. The returns from the Magistrate's courts and even the complaints of Dunlop indicated that there had been no such frequent robberies, or so extensively.<sup>20</sup> Dunlop really had frequently complained that his servants had misconducted themselves by quitting from service



without obtaining his leave. Further, the past records of two-and-a-half-years revealed that there had been no cases of repeated robberies in Jaffna. <sup>97</sup>

Dunlop, however, insisted that his complaint was true. The Magistrate had no records because the culprits were never traced and hence cases were never instituted. <sup>98</sup> Offenders were neither detected nor brought to trial owing to the want of a police force to pursue investigations. Further, if there had been a police force no such crimes would ever have occurred. Because of these contentions the government inquired from the Government Agent, whether a police force could not be established for the district of Jaffna from the proceeds of an assessment which would not be burdensome to the inhabitants. <sup>99</sup>

But the Government Agent was adamant in insisting that a police force was unnecessary. The town was quiet and the residents had been remarkably inoffensive. <sup>100</sup> Yet there followed another representation in 1851 to the Colonial Secretary from some of the inhabitants of Jaffna reiterating the need for a police force. <sup>101</sup> Some action therefore had to be taken.

Meanwhile, in 1852, a report from the Executive Council on the police system in Ceylon was published. <sup>102</sup> Apart from a police force in Colombo and in Negombo, Galle and Kandy, the other areas had their own arrangements for a policing. The government however had been concerned for some time about the inefficiency of these arrangements, and way back in February and March 1843, the Colonial Secretary had wanted reports about these arrangements from the Government Agents and other officials. <sup>103</sup>

Dyke, the Government Agent of the Northern province, had submitted his report in August 1844. <sup>104</sup> He stated that policing through the agency of police *vidanes* over a great mass of the island was impracticable and considerable improvement of that agency was impossible without paying an adequate remuneration to these police *vidanes*. If payment was made to the headmen, the agency could be rendered efficient even immediately. Finally, and most importantly, the Agent was emphatic that considerable improvement in prevention and detection of crime could not be effected except through the aid of such an improved agency. He did not espouse the establishment of a regular police force. <sup>105</sup>

The Government concurred with Government Agent Dyke on the need for providing suitable remuneration to the unpaid police *vidanes* and thereby winning their service and influence for maintaining law and order. <sup>106</sup> But it hesitated in recommending an immediate adoption of the plan because it would be quite expensive. <sup>107</sup> The Government was also reluctant to introduce a new tax for defraying the cost of paying police headmen after the experience of the 1848 rebellion. Therefore no action was eventually taken to implement any recommendations. Hence, the duty of protecting life and property, especially in the villages, was entrusted entirely to unpaid headmen, who remained unenthusiastic. <sup>108</sup> Thus Agent Dyke's views and the Government's efforts ended abortively.

Thomas Skinner, the Civil Engineer in charge of road building, presented an admirably correct analysis at this time of the growth of lawlessness around the 1850's.<sup>109</sup> Disorder had grown owing to delays in the administration of justice and following the state's policy of weakening the power of headmen, who had earlier been vested with authority and responsibility for maintaining order.<sup>110</sup>

In 1856, after so much delay and deliberation a positive move was made towards creating a police system for Jaffna.<sup>111</sup> The Governor concluded that a small police force would be useful in spite of the Government Agent's views to the contrary.<sup>112</sup> The Superintendent of Police visited Jaffna and reported that almost all the advantages of a police system were being enjoyed by the populace. Everything appeared to be orderly, peaceful and clean.<sup>113</sup> Acts of violence were rare, but much petty crime prevailed, and as there was no efficient police force culprits were never detected. Yet, providing only a small police force with its activities confined to a circumscribed area as the town, alone, would not be of much use for the Jaffna district.<sup>114</sup> Hence, again nothing was done about establishing a police force.

Meanwhile, there were many complaints about the police *vidanes* and their unsuitability for discharging their obligations.<sup>115</sup> In 1853, the government had circularised among these officials a set of rules to guide them in searching for stolen property. But owing to the obvious ignorance of the police headmen the ends of justice were being frustrated.<sup>116</sup> No doubt, a police force was needed and had to be created.

The Government Agent, Northern Province, was still not favourably disposed towards providing a police service in Jaffna.<sup>117</sup> The inhabitants would not be able to bear the costs of maintaining one;<sup>118</sup> and the existing machinery of headmen for preserving peace and order and protecting property could be adequately improved and made more efficient. However, the Governor was now firm that a small police force would confer a great advantage to the inhabitants.<sup>119</sup>

Governor, Henry Ward, (1855-60) was influenced by the views of the Magistrate of Jaffna. The Magistrate and his predecessor had impressed on the Government the need to establish a police force.<sup>120</sup> There was a total absence of a police or patrol system or any other form of security for the life and property of the inhabitants of the town. The Pettah of Jaffna with thousands of people was provided with the woefully inadequate services of only an unpaid constable.<sup>121</sup> The outskirts were in a worse position. *Vidanes* generally endeavoured to paint a peaceful picture of their divisions; but really these headmen were so cunning that they rendered it difficult to detect the actual situation.<sup>122</sup> *Vidanes*, valued their appointments largely because of the advantages they derived by sly means that existed for extortion.

The more respectable inhabitants, were also quite unhappy with the prevailing conditions. They yearned for the establishment of a police force and were

willing to contribute towards its maintenance.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the Magistrate unequivocally pronounced that no trifling consideration of expenditure should be allowed to interfere when the welfare of the community itself was at stake.<sup>124</sup> Thus the Magistrate differed from the Government Agent on this question; and the central government accepted the views of the former.

By August 1855, the Government was quite convinced of the necessity for a police force at Jaffna. The Government Agent and the police Magistrate had differed in their views, but the Governor made it clear to the Government Agent that he should exercise his "undoubted abilities" in making the best arrangements for establishing a police force, and for obtaining the means to cover its costs.<sup>125</sup> Governor Ward also planned to visit the Northern province in early 1856, and confer with the authorities on the spot about further measures necessary for the preservation of public security, which was presently provided for inadequately.<sup>126</sup>

Accordingly, by April 1856, it was proclaimed in Jaffna that a police force was to be constituted from January 1857.<sup>127</sup> But there followed forthwith a petition from the inhabitants of the Jaffna gravets,<sup>128</sup> who were apprehensive of the additional and heavier tax it would entail. When the Governor visited the province, the people pleaded for a reduction of the taxes, which were already being levied.<sup>129</sup> They complained that a police force was not needed as they could not afford to pay for one.

Nevertheless the decision of the government was to be implemented. But problems arose owing to Government Agent Dyke's tenacious insistence that a police force was unnecessary and could not be maintained out of impositions levied on the inhabitants. He prescribed conditions that had to be embodied in the proclamation, which made the Superintendent of Police, Colombo, to conclude that it was useless in establishing a force in accordance with these terms.<sup>130</sup> The Government Agent was hence asked for further views on this controversial question.<sup>131</sup>

The Superintendent of Police believed that an efficient police force could be established at Jaffna and with beneficial results. But out of the resources offered by Government Agent Dyke it was impossible to create a suitable police contingent.<sup>132</sup> Within the town, the advantages a police system could offer were already being enjoyed to some extent by the residents—the place was calm, orderly and clean.<sup>133</sup> Although violent offences were rare there was petty crime and most of it were undetected because there was no police force.<sup>134</sup>

Dyke, however, stubbornly insisted that the police were not required; and any attempt to establish a force without his co-operation and support would have been indeed difficult. On the other hand, a force created within the limits and constraints he had prescribed would be of no benefit. Thus the Superintendent had to overcome the intransigence of the Government Agent if a force was to be established. As he was helpless in the face of the Agent's obstinacy he apprised the Colonial Secretary of the difficulty.<sup>135</sup>

Confronted with such obstacles, the sort of police organisation which was eventually formed was naturally unsatisfactory. By 1862, this was apparent and the government pointed out that without the aid of an efficient police force effective sanitary measures could not be enforced nor could a proper state of cleanliness be maintained.<sup>138</sup> It was certainly desirable to establish a better police organisation and the Government Agent was again asked for his suggestions.<sup>137</sup>

But Dyke remained obdurate and dilatory. The people did not desire a police force. They generally entertained an unfavourable opinion of it, and the exposure of the poor conduct of an ill-organised police service recently had strengthened these views.<sup>133</sup>

Even by 1864, without any police force for all practical purpose, the Government Agent was everything and handled all problems.<sup>139</sup> None of Dyke's acts had ever roused public opposition as none had caused any ostensible public dissatisfaction.<sup>140</sup> In such circumstances, Dyke's opposition towards the creation of a police force was intelligible.

But the Government had by now made up its mind. An Ordinance for the establishment and regulation of an efficient police force was framed. Dyke regretted that only a limited amount of time had been allowed to public officers for considering the proposal.<sup>141</sup> And again, the Government Agent indicated his unhappiness about the creation of a police force within his domain.<sup>144</sup>

In 1866, the residents of the Vanarponnai, Nallur, and Chundikuli divisions in Jaffna had requested the Governor to create a police force. Dyke's plans for establishing a small police force at Jaffna in the event of a withdrawal of the military force, which had hitherto restrained to some extent the commission of crimes, were required by the Governor.<sup>142</sup> The pressure for the creation of a police force was mounting in spite of the Government Agent's view that it was not indispensable. The people of Karaiyur and Jaffna town too now asked for a police establishment.<sup>143</sup> A small but efficient police force was imperative for providing security for the life and property of the residents of Jaffna and the Government Agent's proposals for establishing such a force were requested.<sup>144</sup>

Unable to withstand the escalating pressure any longer, Dyke outlined the limits of the town and suburbs of Jaffna where a police force was to be established.<sup>145</sup> The force was to function under the immediate superintendence of the Assistant Agent, who in turn would act under the general direction of the Government Agent. There was to be a Head Constable, two sergeants and a few constables. The Assistant Agent would officiate as the Assistant Superintendent, while the Superintendent of Police would be in Colombo.<sup>146</sup> Although Dyke, could not now oppose any more the establishment of a force, at least, he planned to enure his control and direction over it.

In June 1866, at last, a final announcement was conveyed. <sup>147</sup> The Governor would establish a police force in Jaffna and its suburbs from January 1867. A change in the Government Agent's suggested scheme was the replacement of the Head Constable by an Inspector, who was to be independent of the control of the Government Agent. The cost of the land and buildings for the police stations were to be defrayed from the general revenue. The government would contribute a proportion of the money necessary for the salaries of the police personnel. Pensions and contingent changes, however, were to be paid out of an assessment levied on the residents. <sup>148</sup>

While the Governor had generally approved Dyke's proposals, Dyke still entertained some misgivings about placing a force at a distance from Colombo under an inspector, independent of local control. He preferred instead, a Head Constable, lesser in rank, subject to him and his assistant. <sup>149</sup> The Government Agent also discountenanced a formal force and there was to be no distinctive dress or uniform for the 'police. "...the people of Jaffna have a very strong dislike to any such requirement and the requiring of much in this respect would be a very great impediment to procuring respectable persons for the service". <sup>150</sup>

Finally, Dyke did have his way; the Governor permitted the force to be under a Head Sergeant, instead of an Inspector, and the establishment to be subject to the Assistant Agent's control. <sup>151</sup> Furthermore, the Governor, and the Chief Superintendent of Police, also concurred with Dyke's views concerning uniforms. <sup>152</sup> The force was to be composed of men from the area and in a newly created establishment if the recruits were compelled to don a type of garb to which they had an aversion the consequences could be undesirable. Now that a police force was set up, according to the recommendations of the Commissioners of Military expenditure the troops at Jaffna were withdrawn from January 1867. <sup>153</sup>

In January 1867, itself, however, the Government Agent complained that the police service was unpopular. <sup>154</sup> The applicants to join the force were unsatisfactory, although a higher salary than that paid to messengers was offered. To be in charge of the collection of the tax necessary to meet the cost of the police force a writer or clerk was appointed <sup>155</sup> but there was a *lacunae* in the law or no limit was prescribed defining the rate of assessment. <sup>156</sup>

By May 1867, the Superintendent of Police, G. W. R. Campbell, commented that the police force at Jaffna was large. <sup>157</sup> Hence, Dyke reduced numbers—there was to be only a Head Sergeant and twenty-seven constables. A rate of five per cent on the value of the property of the residents was to be imposed, and the force was to be so composed so as to be maintained within the amount thus realised. <sup>158</sup>

In August, after the reduction of the establishment, the Colonial Secretary forwarded to the Government Agent the Chief Superintendent's critical constructive observations for improving the force. <sup>159</sup> Even under the able administration of



Dyke, radical change was necessary to effect a substantial improvement in the police force. There was no individual with technical police experience attached to the service; the policemen did not live in a common place of residence, but lived scattered over an area. As they did not like to be transferred from one division to another they failed to gain a varied experience, which was useful and necessary.<sup>160</sup> Briefly the police force in Jaffna was peculiar; it was functioning under the direct control of the Assistant Agent and had no connection whatever with the regular force, and it differed very much from the regular force.

To remedy these shortcomings, Campbell proposed a scheme whereby the force could be improved with training.<sup>161</sup> "...Mr. Dyke has with great pains selected a very fine body of men....", acknowledged the Chief Superintendent, yet, to bring the force in Jaffna up to the level of a force elsewhere in the Colony, the Jaffna police establishment needed improvement.<sup>162</sup> This would also render the police of the colony to evolve into one homogeneous force which would be uniformly good and easily supervised. This plan was approved by the government.<sup>163</sup> Campbell further commented that the village headmen, supposed to perform some police duties, being unpaid for their services and not under the direct supervision of either the police or the magisterial officers, were often corrupt. Only a very few of them were efficient. However, they could with some changes be made to serve as valuable auxiliaries of the regular police.<sup>164</sup>

But Dyke continued to exhibit an intractable attitude. In view of the decisions and orders of the government, and the declarations of the Queen's Advocate, which were in support of Dyke's view, an adoption of Campbell's proposals for reform would amount to a breach of faith to the public, the recruits in the police service and to Dyke through whose instrumentality the orders and decisions for creating a police force had been implemented.<sup>165</sup> Continuing his diatribe, Dyke observed that regarding the offences and other matters, which the force had been called upon to tackle, the number of *nil entires* was remarkable—the police force was therefore hardly needed. Moreover, a tax of five per cent for the maintenance of the force, often levied on a large proportion of poor properties, was an unnecessary burden.<sup>166</sup> Thus was Dyke opposed to the last and recalcitrant in his attitude towards the plans for establishing a police force in North Ceylon.

Dyke's contention was supported by his worthy successor, Government Agent, William Twynam (1867-1895). Quoting statistics, Twynam demonstrated that the number of serious cases, tried during a period of twelve years ending in 1881, was two-hundred-and twenty-five; and by 1855 was as low as hundred. By 1867, in twelve years there had been one-hundred-and-fifty-seven cases. During these spells of twelve years each the numbers tried before courts had been 886; 649; 309 and 323, respectively. Twynam attributed this progressive decrease in crime to the efforts of Dyke<sup>168</sup> and not to a police force. Dyke had raised the position and tone of headmen thereby inducing them to exert their influence in maintaining order.

Furthermore, in order to provide the necessary support to headmen, he had recommended the establishment of certain courts and insisted on the necessity for continuing them.<sup>169</sup> Consequently the cutting off of ears for robbing jewellery, gang robberies and other serious types of crime, which had been once common were later seldom heard of. If crimes had still been committed the culprits had been generally brought to justice.<sup>170</sup> Thus, Twynam, indicated that Dyke had effectively ensured a reduction of crime, without the machinery of a regular type police force, and he reinforced his predecessor's opinion that a regular police force was not needed for Jaffna or North Ceylon. An improved group of headmen were quite adequate and suitable for maintaining law and order in North Ceylon.

Government Agent Dyke had become an independent official. He was distant from Colombo, his province was an outpost, and as head of his area he wanted to be free to make his own decisions and arrangements for administering his province. Therefore, he was intolerant of any interference from the centre. With his long experience and intimate knowledge of his province, he considered himself the expert! not the Governor or his advisers in Colombo. Moreover, Dyke wanted to run his province economically and with the least burden on its inhabitants. The headmen could be paid and they could be entrusted with police duties. Such an arrangement was certainly cheaper than paying out of taxers for a special regular force. Through the agency of headmen imperial administration could be effected quite economically. There was a blend of the characteristics of indirect rule and imperialism on the cheap in the way in which Dyke wanted to discharge his duties as pro-consul in his province.

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10. Dickman, C., *The Manual of the Ceylon Civil Service*, (Colombo, 1865), p.191; also see his *Heads of Minutes, Circular letters, etc.* (Ceylon, 1849), p.16, for convention—25 November 1832.

11. See Dickman, C., *Heads of the Minutes, Circular Letters etc. op. cit.* p.35.
12. SLNA—6/1161—Collector to Chief Secretary, 10 May 1833.
13. *ibid*
14. Pippet, G. K., *A History of the Ceylon Police, Vol. I —1795-1870*, Colombo, 1938), p.25.
15. *ibid.*
16. *ibid.*
17. Bennett, J. W., *Ceylon and its Capabilities* (London, 1843), p. 235
18. SLNA—20/520—233—Colonial Secretary to Government Agent—3 January 1835.
19. *ibid.*—See also enclosure—Extract from the report of the District Judge of Mannar.
20. *ibid.*
21. *ibid.*
22. SLNA—20/786-428—No. 216, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 2 July 1864.
23. *ibid.*
24. Ievers, R. W. *Manual of the North Central Province*, (Ceylon 1899).
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27. SLNA—7/574—No.95, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 24 April 1843.
28. SLNA—7/574—No.145, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 27 June 1843.
29. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.*, p.71.
30. *ibid*
31. *ibid*
32. *ibid*
33. *ibid.* pp. 122-123
34. Ievers, R.W., *op.cit.* p.70.
35. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.* see especially Appendix D—Dyke's No.211to Colonial Secretary, 9 August 1844, p.317ff. ....
36. *ibid.*
37. *ibid.*
38. *ibid.*
39. *ibid.*
40. *ibid.*
41. *ibid.*
42. *ibid.*
42. *ibid.*

43. Boake, W.J.S., *Mannar—A Monograph* (Colombo, 1888) p.14.
44. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.*
45. *ibid.* pp. 105-107.
46. *ibid.*
47. *Governor's Addresses, op.cit.* p. 27; also see SLNA—20/821—258, No.63, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 20 March 19848 and elsewhere. Government Agent's No.69—25 February 1848.
48. SLNA—6/1995—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 27 March 1849. (no number): also see enclosers, Government Agent's Diary—extracts taken from entry of 15 March 1849; SLNA—20/549—270 No.182, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 25 August 1854.
49. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.* p. 205; also see SLNA—6/1995—See No.68—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 16 May 1849, on cattle stealing also see SLNA—20/854—259—No.230, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 17 October 1848.
50. SLNA—20/854—259—No.230, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 17 October 1848; see especially enclosure. Copy of Letter to A.O. Brodie, from Colonial Secretary, 16 October 1848.
51. SLNA-6/2238B—Part I—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary—27 March 1849, (no number).
52. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.*, p.187.
53. Ievers, R.W., *op.cit.*, p.54.
54. SLNA—6/1995—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 27 March 1849, sent while on circuit.
55. SLNA—6/1995—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 27 March 1849, see enclosure—Extracts from Government Agent's Diary from entry of 14 March 1849.
56. *ibid.*
57. *ibid.*—see especially entry of 15 March 1849 in Diary.
58. SLNA—20/188-261—No.70, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 27 April 1849; also see Government Agent's letter to Colonial Secretary, 27 March 1849.
59. *ibid.*, also see enclosure Colonial Secretary to District Judge, 4April,
60. SLNA—20/188—261—No. 79, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 19 May 1849.
61. *ibid.*
62. *ibid.*, also see enclosure, Queen's Advocate to Colonial Secretary, 4 May 1849
63. *ibid*
64. SLNA—6/1995—No.68, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 16 May 1849; also see SLNA—6/2238B—Part 1—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 16 May 1849.

65. *ibid.*
66. *ibid.*
67. *ibid.*
68. *ibid.*
69. *ibid.*
70. *ibid.*
71. *ibid.*
72. *ibid.*
73. *ibid.*
74. *ibid.*
75. *ibid.*
76. SLNA—20/209—262—Colonial Secretary to Government Agent circular 23 April 1850.
77. *ibid.*
78. *Governors' Addresses, op.cit.*, pp.232-233.
79. *ibid.*
80. *ibid.*
81. SLNA—20/549-270—No.272, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent—15 December 1854.
82. SLNA—20/549-270—No.272, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent—8 December 1854—see also enclosures—No.281, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 30 December 1854 and letter to A. Y. Adams, the Stipendiary Justice of the Peace.
83. SLNA—20/1168—273—No.160, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 21 July 1855—also see enclosure, extract of letter to Government Agent, Central Province.
84. *ibid.*
85. *ibid.*
86. SLNA—6/2438—No.27. Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 27 January 1858—also see enclosure No.5 of 18 January 1858.
87. Dickman, C., *Ceylon Civil Service Manual, op.cit.*, p.170.
88. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.*, p.205.
89. *ibid.*
90. See reference to this view held by W. C. Twynam, Government Agent, Northern Province in 1871, *ibid.*
91. SLNA—20/778-264—No.37. Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 7 March 1851.
92. *ibid.* See enclosure, Dunlop to Governor, 24 February 1851.
93. *ibid.*



94. *ibid.*
95. *ibid.*
96. SLNA-20/778-264—Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 2 May 1851—also see enclosure, Colonial Secretary to Dunlop, 30 April 1851.
97. *ibid.*
98. SLNA—20/778-264—No.98, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 6 June 1851, also see enclosure R.J.Dunlop to Colonial Secretary, 12 May 1851  
*ibid*  
SLNA—6/2096, Part 1—see Government Agent to Colonial Secretary—1 March 1851, for this view.
101. SLNA—20/1052-265-No. 79 Colonial Secretary to Government Agent 20 September 1851; also see enclosure letter from R. F. Thoussaint Jr. to Colonial Secretary, 9 September 1851 on behalf of memorialists.
102. For an account of this see Pippet, G. K., *op.cit.*, p.122.
103. *ibid.* pp. 122-123.
104. *ibid.*, also see Dyke to Colonial Secretary, No.211 of 9 August 1844-*ibid.*,p. 314.
105. *ibid.*
106. *ibid.*
107. *ibid.*
108. *ibid.* pp. 123-124, 134.
109. *ibid.* pp. 136-137.
110. *ibid.*
111. SLNA—20/1076—274—No. 60, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 17 April 1856—also see enclosures—Proclamation to establish a police force; No. 114, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 12 June 1856, and enclosure No.30, Colonial Secretary to Superintendent of Police, Colombo, 10 June 1856.
112. SLNA—20/1168-273-No.227—Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 24 October 1853; also see SLNA—6/2305—No. 326, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 21 August 1855.
113. SLNA—20/1644—275—No. 207, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 23 September 1856; also see enclosure No.50, Superintendent of Police to Colonial Secretary, 5 August 1856.
114. *ibid.*; also see Pippet, G.K. *op.cit.* p.138.
115. SLNA—20/1770—268—Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, Circular of 9 September 1853—also see enclosure—Instructions to Headmen—24 August 1853.
116. *ibid.*

117. SLNA—20/1644—275—No.207, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 23 September 1856—see enclosure for Dyke's view.
118. SLNA—62/349—see Petition of the inhabitants of Jaffna Gravets complaining about the inability to pay a tax to meet the costs of a police force in this volume of despatches filed separately.
119. SLNA—20/1168—273—No. 227—Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 24 October 1853.
120. SLNA—20/272—No.126 Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 25 June 1855—see also enclosure No. 24 Police Magistrate, Jaffna, to Governor, 7 June 1855.
121. *ibid.*
122. *ibid.*
123. *ibid.*
124. *ibid.*
125. SLNA—20/1168-273—No.183, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent 23 August 1855.
126. *ibid.*
127. SLNA—20/1076—274—No.60, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent 17 April 1856.
128. SLNA—6/2349—see enclosed Petition in this volume of despatches.
129. *ibid.*
130. SLNA—20/1644-275—No.207, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 23 September 1856—see especially enclosure No.50, Superintendent of Police to Colonial Secretary, 5 August 1856.
131. *ibid.*
132. *ibid.*
133. Pipet, G.K. *op.cit.* p. 138.
134. *ibid.*
135. SLNA—20/1644-275-No.207, see enclosure No.50, Superintendent of Police to Colonial Secretary, 5 August 1856.
136. SLNA—20/1435-285, No.290, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 25 October 1862.
137. *ibid.*
138. SLNA—20/1703-433, No. 47, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 2 March 1863; also see enclosure, No.372 Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 1 November 1862.
139. Martyn, John H., *Notes on Jaffna—Chronological, Historical and Biographical, etc., With an Appendix.* (Tellipalai, 1923) pp. 264-265 quoted from *Jaffna Catholic Gcardian*, 17 March 1894.
140. *ibid.*

141. SLNA—20/725-432—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 10 October 1865 (no number—written on circuit).
142. SLNA—20/989-293—No.67 Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 7 April 1866.
143. SLNA—20/989-293—No. 109, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 18 May 1866.
144. *ibid.*
145. SLNA—20/725-432—No. 140 Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 4 June 1866.
146. *ibid.*
147. SLNA—20/989-293—No. 135, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 25 June 1866.
148. *ibid.*
149. SLNA 20/725-432—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1866 (no number), also see No. 135, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent 25 June 1866.
150. SLNA 20/725-432, No.232—Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 25 August 1866.
151. SLNA 20/989-293—No.169, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 2 August 1866; also see enclosure No.224 Deputy Queen's Advocate to Coloni Secretary.
152. SLNA—20/989-293 No.195, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 14 September 1866; also see annexure No.34, Chief Superintendent, to Colonial Secretary, 8 September 1866.
153. SLNA—20/989-293—No.207, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 12 October 1866.
154. SLNA—20/89-435—MNo.22, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 22 January 1867.
155. SLNA—20/89-435—No.80, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 4 March 1867.
156. SLNA—20/89-435—No.112, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 25 March 1867.
157. SLNA— 20/89-435—No.142, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1867.
158. *ibid.*
159. SLNA—20/66-294, No.186, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 5 August 1867; also see annexure No.147, Chief Superintendent toColonial Secretary (no date).

160. *ibid.*; also see Pippet, G. K., *op.cit.* p. 237.
161. *ibid.*
162. *ibid.*
163. SLNA—20/66-294—No.245, Colonial Secretary to Government Agent, 15 October 1867; also see annexure No.208, Chief Superintendent to Colonial Secretary 2 October 1867.
164. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.* pp.246-257—also see Report of G.W.R. Campbell, Inspector General of Police, to Colonial Secretary, 26 December 1867.
165. SLNA—20/145-436—No.272, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 23 September 1867.
166. SLNA—20/145-936—No.273, Government Agent to Colonial Secretary, 23 September 1867.
167. Pippet, G.K., *op.cit.*, pp.262-263.
168. *ibid.*
169. *ibid.*
170. *ibid.*

## **SOME ASPECTS OF POPULATION CHANGE IN SRI LANKA (1946 — 1971)**

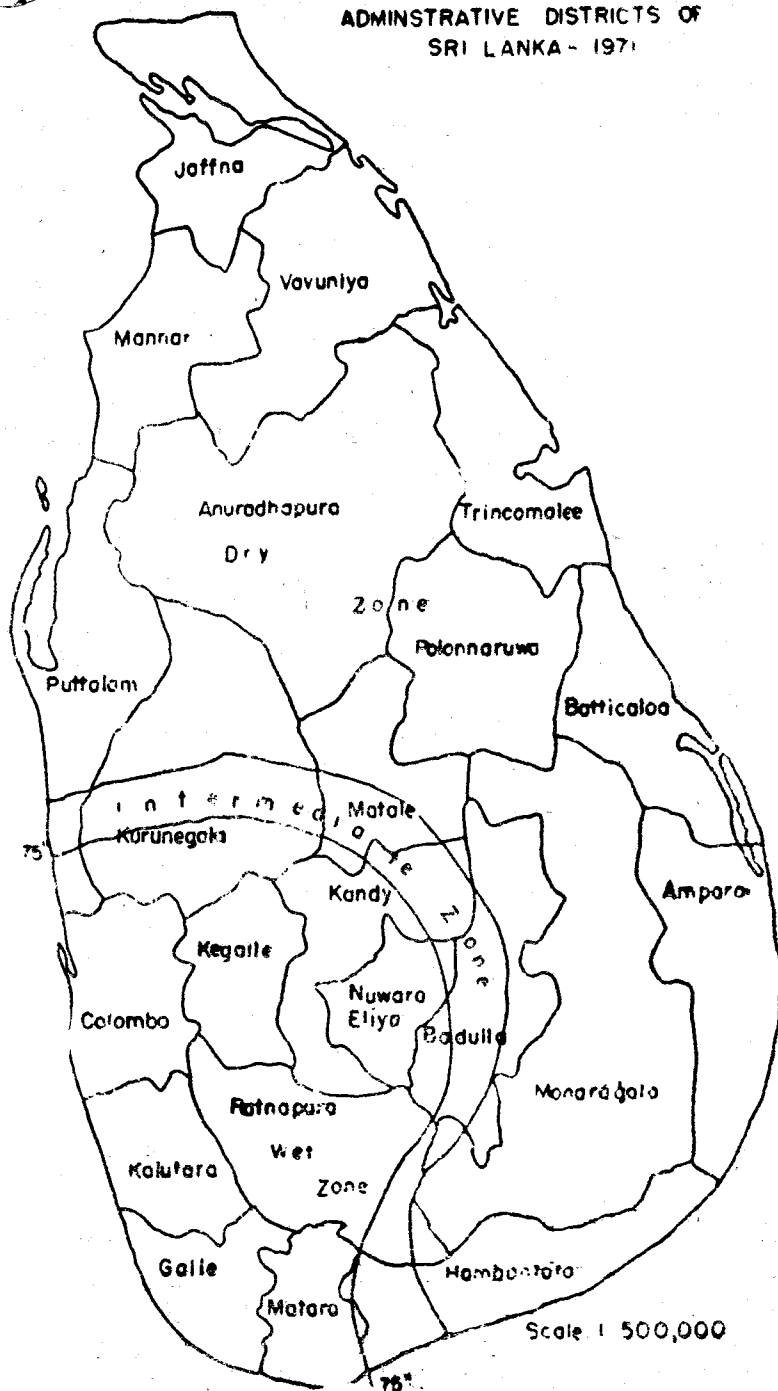
**BY P. BALASUNDRAMPILLAI**

Population of Sri Lanka expanded rapidly in the years between 1946 and 1971. Within this period, there was also a change in the pattern of distribution of population. According to the first census of 1971, the population of Sri Lanka was 2.4 millions and this increased to 6.7 millions in 1946. 1 The period upto 1946 may be considered as one of relatively slow growth when the rate of annual increase was 1.3 percent. Since 1946, the rate of growth appears to have doubled and averaged 2.6 percent, although within this period, there were some years when the rate of growth has been over higher. Upto 1946, immigration has contributed to the growth of population but after 1946, especially in the period after 1964, with the implementation of Srimavo-Sartri Pact, emmigration has increased. 2 Further, emmigration would continue with the implementation of Srimavo-Indra Pact of 1974. 3 After 1960s, emmigration had a negative impact on the rate of growth. The high growth rate especially after 1946, is associated with the control of malaria, reduction of maternal and infant mortality and the general improvement of the health of the population. General health of the population improved as a result of the introduction of advanced methods of sanitation and medicine, on the one hand, and the supply of free or, subsidised food and other facilities on the other 4. The overall improvement of the quality of life over the years must be considered as a significant factor leading to the expansion of the population.

The growth of population after 1946, has not been uniform throughout the country. Generally, growth rates have been high everywhere, but there are some regions where the rate of growth has been explosive. The rapid expansion was conspicuous in the Dry Zone, while the Wet the Zone experienced moderate growth 5. Population statistics pertaining to administrative districts demonstrate



FIG. 1

ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS OF  
SRI LANKA - 1971

regional disparities in population growth 6. (Map 1) Columns 2 1, 2 and 3 in Table i shows the population growth for the three intercensal periods while Column 4 shows the increase for the whole period. The data in Table 1 is shown in four maps.

Table 1. Population increase by intercensal periods and for the period between 1946-71. (in percent)

District	1946/53	1953/63	1963/71	1946/71
Colombo	20.3	29.2	21.1	88.1
Kalutara	14.7	20.6	15.9	59.8
Kandy	18.1	24.1	13.8	67.0
Matale	29.1	27.1	23.7	102.2
Nuwara Eliya	21.3	22.2	14.0	68.0
Galle	14.0	22.3	15.0	60.1
Matara	17.5	24.6	14.2	66.6
Hambantota	27.9	43.2	24.3	127.3
Jaffna	15.8	24.5	15.0	65.2
Mannar	38.5	37.6	29.5	147.2
Vavuniya	51.0	95.4	39.5	310.3
Batticaloa	30.9	40.4	31.6	144.6
Amparai	40.6	70.8	28.8	195.3
Trincomalee	10.5	65.1	38.6	148.0
Kurunegala	29.1	36.1	20.6	116.6
Puttalam	25.2	32.2	25.5	106.8
Anuradhapura	64.3	71.7	39.1	227.5
Polonnaruwa	—	—	43.8	687.0
Badulla	25.4	40.0	18.8	119.5
Monaragala	—	—	44.8	99.0
Ratnapura	22.7	29.5	21.2	92.7
Kegalla	17.4	22.7	12.7	63.0
SRI LANKA	21.6	30.1	19.8	90.3

Source: Calculated from the relevant censuses.

#### 1946 — 1953

In the eight years between 1946 and 1953, the population of the country increased by 21.6 percent. Matale, Hambantota, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Amparai, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Monaragala and Ratnapura show an increase higher than the national average. (Map 2) Eradication of malaria helped to reduce the death rate in these districts and it also made resettlement of these areas feasible. These areas were made attractive to new settlers by the restoration of the abandoned tanks and the policy of state assisted colonization schemes. During this period, growth of population was lowest in

the Trincomalee district. This was largely a result of the migration of the population from the district with the reduction of naval and port activities of the Trincomalee harbour. Of the Dry Zone districts, other than Trincomalee, Jaffna district recorded a low increase. Jaffna district had shown lower rate of growth in the past as well due to out migration. All the districts in the Dry Zone other than Jaffna and Trincomalee experienced a rate of growth which was higher than the national average.

### 1953 — 1963

On the whole, the pattern of population growth in this period appears to be similar to the 1946-1953 period except that Trincomalee district which had experienced a low rate of growth earlier, showed a relatively higher rate of growth. (Map 3) All Dry Zone districts, except Jaffna, experienced above average rates of growth. Rates of population growth in the Wet Zone were lower than the average for the island. Increased colonization and extension of cultivated area in the Dry Zone attracted migrants from the already crowded Wet Zone. During this period, the Government policy appeared to favour the resettlement of the Dry Zone and the Government provided many incentives to the new settlers in the Dry Zone. Among the Wet Zone districts, Colombo and Ratnapura stand out as areas where the rate of growth was closer to the national average. Urban and industrial expansion in the Colombo district and agricultural development in the Ratnapura district proved to be an attraction to migrants from all parts of the country.

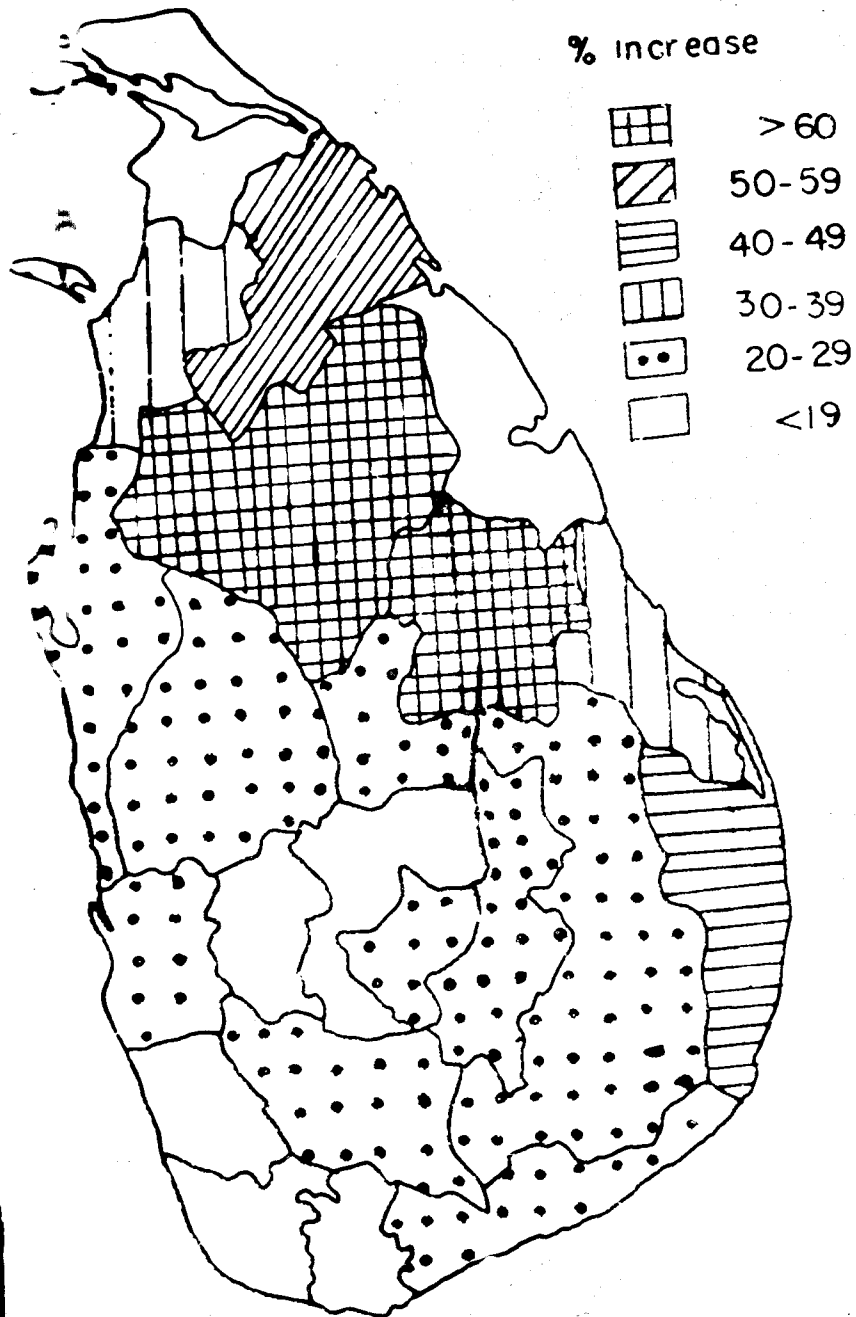
In the eight years between 1963 and 1971, Colombo, Matale, Hambantota, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Amparai, Puttalam, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Monaragala and Ratnapura (Map 4) experienced rates of growth higher than the national average. Colombo district also had a growth higher than the national average. In all other districts, the intercensal increase was lower than the national average.

### 1946 — 1971

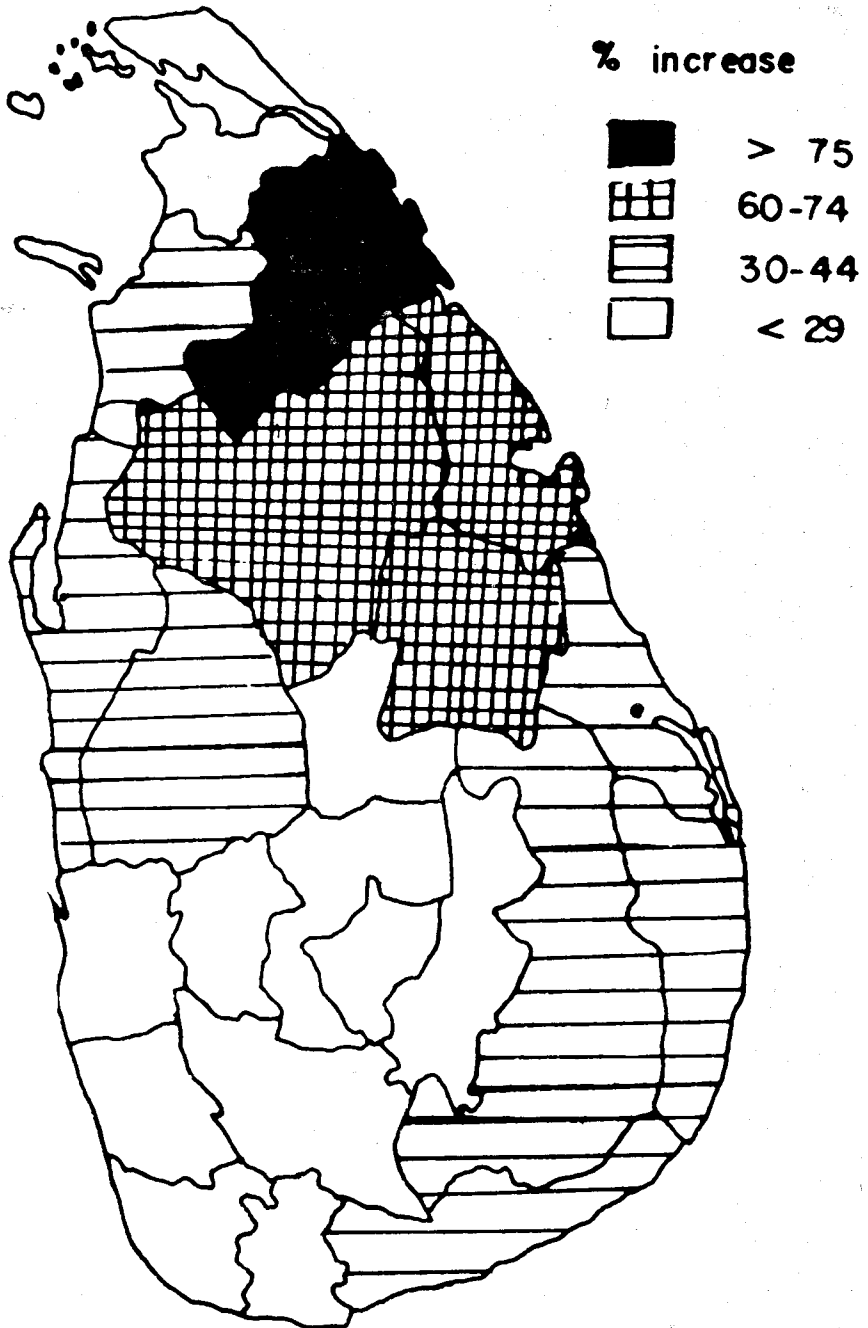
On the basis of the rate of population of growth between 1946 and 1971, administrative district of the island can be classified into six groups. (Map 5)

Growth Pattern	Increase (Percent)	Districts
Low growth	60 - 68	Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, Jaffna & Kegalle.
Moderate growth	80 - 99	Colombo, Ratnapura and Monoragalla.
Intermediate growth	103 - 127	Matalae, Hambantota, Kurunegala, Puttalam, and Badulla.
High growth	141 - 228	Batticaloa, Mannar, Trincomalee Amparai and Anuradhapura.
Very high growth	310	Vavuniya.
Phenominal growth	687	Polonnaruwa.

# POPULATION CHANGES BY DISTRICT 1946-53



## POPULATION CHANGES BY DISTRICT 1953-63





# POPULATION CHANGES BY DISTRICT 1963-71

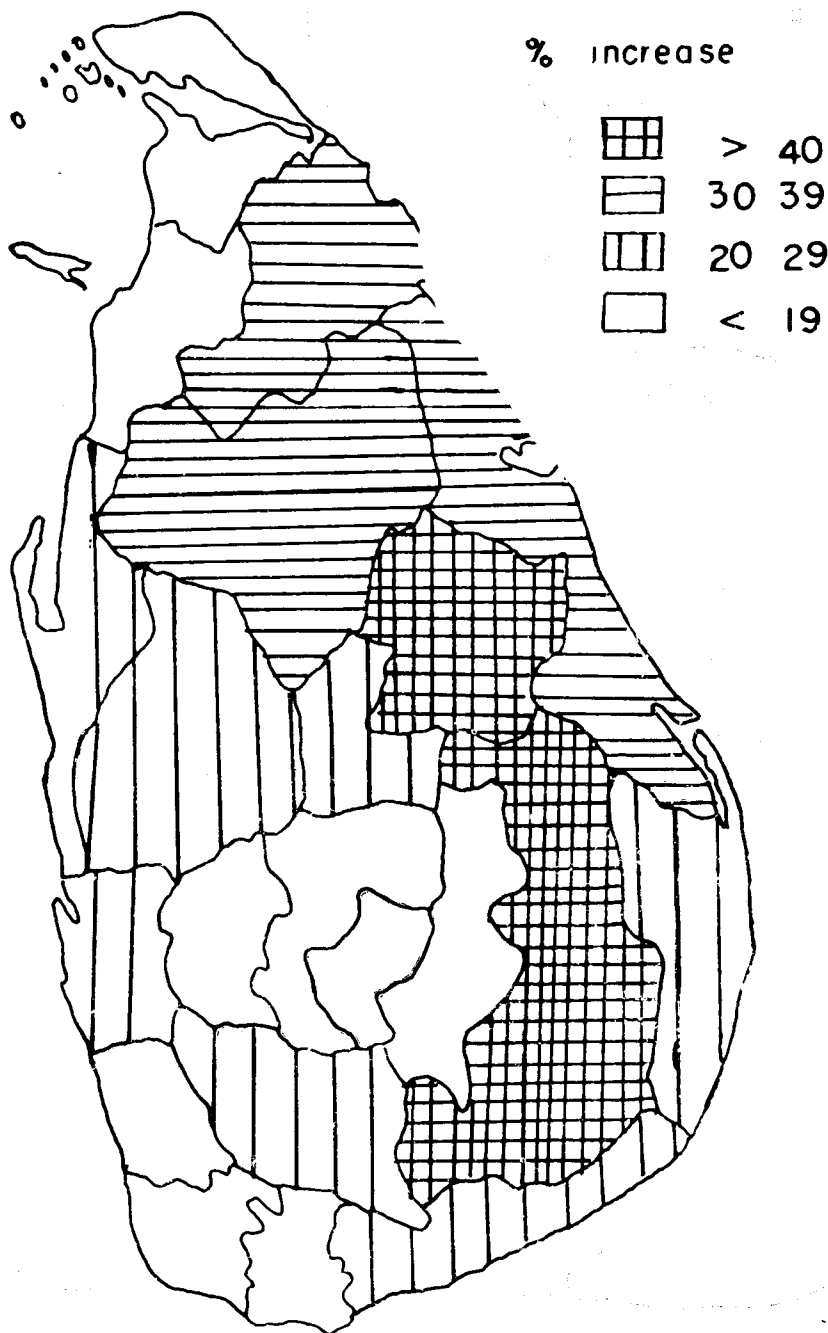
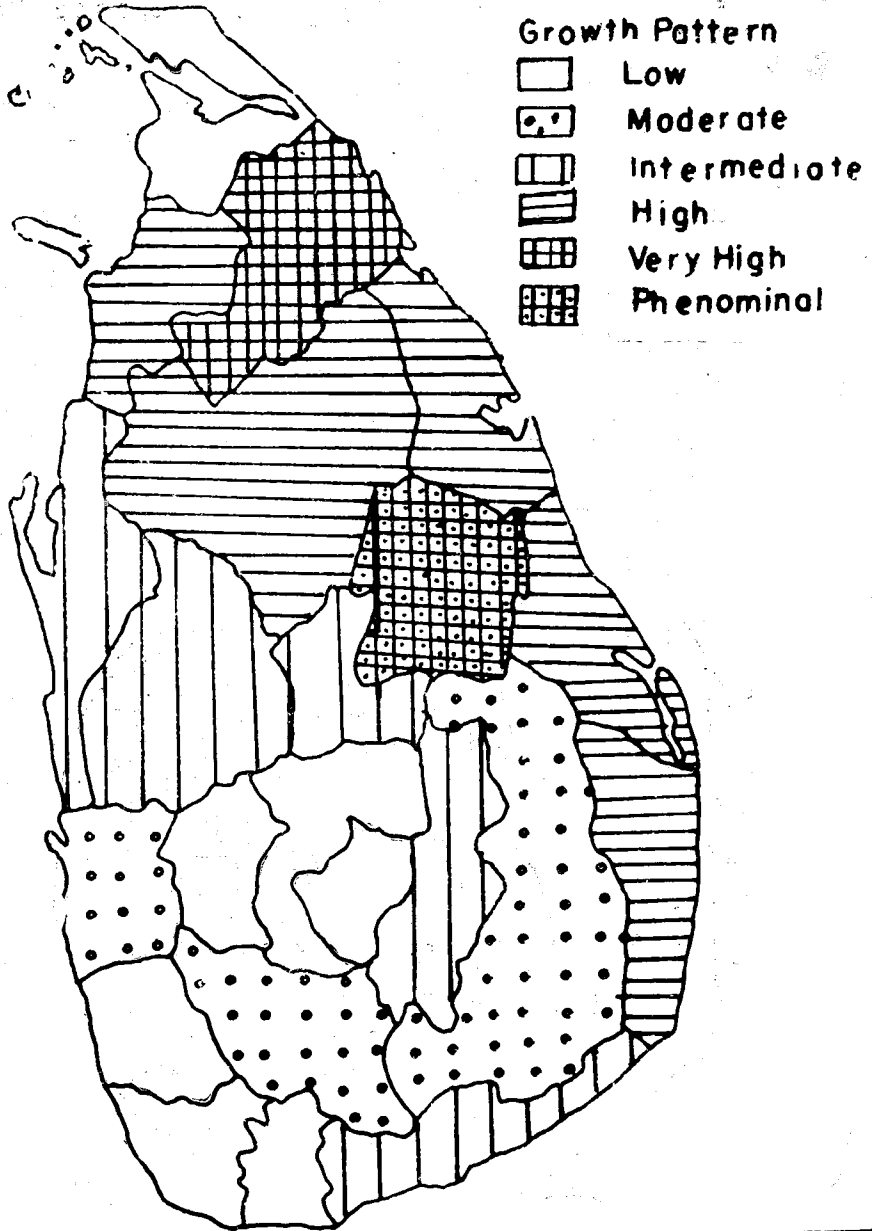


FIG 5

# POPULATION CHANGES BY DISTRICT 1946 - 71



The low rate of growth of population between 60-68 percent growth is observed in seven districts. Although the percentage growth is low, the growth in terms of absolute numbers is high. All of them had large populations and high densities. These districts are comparatively developed and have limited potential for further agricultural development. Number of people migrated outwards from these districts from 1946-1971 was high 7. Colombo, Ratnapura and Monaragala in group 11, though diverse in economic structure, had a similar growth rate. Industrial expansion in the Colombo district in 1960s, attracted migrants in sizeable numbers. Ratnapura district is the only district in the Wet Zone which had a population growth similar to the national rate of growth. Udawalawa multipurpose scheme and other agricultural activities helped to develop the district. Monaragala district is the only Dry Zone district to experience a lower rate of growth probably because of late development of agriculture there.

The districts in group 111, are the border districts of the Wet Zone. These districts are characterised by intermediate rates of growth. As they are bordering the Wet Zone, the rate of growth in these districts appear to be similar to those of the Wet Zone. Within individual districts climatic variations appeared to influence the rates of population growth. Drier areas show population characteristics that are to be found in the Dry Zone, while wetter areas have similarities with the Wet Zone districts. For example, in the Puttalam district, there are two distinct areas:- (1) Puttalam area falls entirely in the Dry Zone. This area of the district had a population increase of 236 percent between 1946 and 1971. (11) The Chilaw region of the Puttalam district which falls largely within the Wet Zone had an increase of 80.5 percent during this period. Similarly, in Kurunegala, Matale, Badulla and Hambantota, there were remarkable intra-district variation of population growth. Batticaloa, Amparai, Anuradhapura, Trincomalee, and Mannar in group 1V experienced a high growth of population. All these districts benefited through the eradication of malaria and large scale agricultural colonization schemes and associated activities. Vavuniya and Polonnaruwa in group V and VI increased their population by 310 and 687 percent respectively. Main reason for the increase appears to be the expansion of agriculture.

The process of urban growth in Sri Lanka has been slow. The studies of Gavin Jones and Selvaratnam (1970) and Gunatilake (1973) reveal the low urban growth of the country 8. Between 1946 and 1953, the rate of growth of urban population of the country was not very different from the rate of growth of population of the country as a whole. But after 1953, urban expansion accelerated and urban population increased by 62.7 percent as against the national population expansion of 30.7 percent. Between 1963 and 1971, the same trend continued, the rate of increase of urban population being 41.3 percent as against the national average of 19.9 percent. It must be noted, however that in the 1963-71 period, the definition of "urban population" was somewhat different from the earlier phase because after 1963, even the smaller towns administered by Town Councils were considered to be urban areas. In the earlier phase, only those areas administered by the Municipal and urban Councils were classified as urban. Table 11 shows some characteristics of urban population of Sri Lanka.

**Table 11. Total population, urban-rural ratio and urban settlements.**

	1946	1953	1963	1971
Total population in Thousands	6657	8097	10590	12690
Urban (percent)	15.4	15.3	19.1	22.4
Rural (percent)	84.6	84.7	81.2	77.6
Number of urban settlements	42	43	99	135

Source:- Based on Census Reports of Sri Lanka.

More important reasons for the urban growth in Sri Lanka have been the natural increase of population within the urban areas, the redefinition of urban boundaries and elevation of rural areas to urban status. The rural-urban migration factor appears to have played a minor role in the urban growth in Sri Lanka. In the 1946-71 period, significant urban expansion was seen only in the Colombo district and in some of the urban centres in the Dry Zone.

The dominance of agriculture in the economy, slow rates of industrialisation and service activities are the reasons contributing to the slow pace of urbanization in Sri Lanka. Moreover, opening up of the Dry Zone inhibited the migration of the people to urban areas. Expansion of the cultivated area in the Dry Zone during this period, was very pronounced and according to the Land Utilization Survey Report of 1967, some 20,000 acres of land in the Dry Zone was brought under cultivation annually. The growth of agricultural settlements led to the development of service centres in most parts of the Dry Zone. Rural areas are fairly well served by the educational, health and retail outlet facilities and this has tended to reduce the need to migrate to urban areas. Traditional attachment to agricultural land further impedes rural-urban migration.

The pattern of percentage of urban population by district between 1946 and 1971 are shown in Table 111. Throughout the period, the Colombo district remained as the highest urbanised district. Next to Colombo, Jaffna and Trincomalee are the most urbanised districts. The growth of urban population in the Jaffna district increased rapidly after 1950s with the creation of several urban settlements. Though Trincomalee remained a high urbanised district, its urban percentage declined from 42.8 percent in 1946 to 25.1 percent in 1963 and increased to 38.4 percent in 1971.

**Table 111. Urban population by district, 1946 — 1971.**  
(percentage to the total district population)

District	1946	1953	1963	1971
Colombo	40.7	41.5	46.4	55.2
Kalutara	11.1	11.1	20.0	21.9
Kandy	10.7	10.8	11.4	12.4
Matale	9.0	8.6	11.5	11.9
Nuwara Eliya	4.0	5.5	6.2	6.1

Galle	10.9	10.4	14.9	15.3
Matara	12.8	12.7	20.3	21.1
Hambantota	7.2	5.8	8.1	9.8
Jaffna	13.0	13.5	23.1	30.4
Mannar	—	—	15.0	14.3
Vavuniya	—	—	16.3	21.7
Batticaloa	6.4	6.4	25.1	27.1
Amparai	—	—	13.5	11.7
Trincomalee	42.8	31.4	25.1	38.4
Kurunegala	3.2	3.3	3.5	4.1
Puttalam	9.2	9.4	12.4	13.9
Anuradhapura	8.8	8.0	11.8	10.0
Polonnaruwa	—	—	5.2	10.0
Badulla	4.4	4.7	8.0	9.5
Monaragala	—	—	2.6	2.7
Ratnapura	4.2	4.5	4.8	7.6
Kegalla	1.2	1.2	3.0	7.4

Source:- Calculated from Census Reports of Sri Lanka

The growth of urban population in the district was due to, creation of new towns than urban-rural migration. Batticaloa, the only district other than the above mentioned districts which has the urban ratio above the national percentage. Nuwara Eliya, Hambantota, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Monaragala, Kegalla and Ratnapura are the least urbanised districts in the country. There are two important current patterns of urbanization that could be identified: (i) the growth of small towns (central places) throughout the country and particularly in the Dry Zone. (ii) The growth of Colombo and the suburbs into a large metropolis. The Dry Zone development and the proposed Mahaveli Project accelerated the growth of the small towns; the Free Trade Zone of Colombo North and the establishment of the capital city at Kotte (Jayawardenapura) will help the city of Colombo to grow as a large urban agglomeration.

Sri Lanka is a multi-racial and multi-religious country. Sinhalese (Low Country and Kandyan), Tamils (Sri Lankan and Indian), and Moors (Sri Lankan and Indian) are the major racial groups. Malays, Burghars and the Veddas are the minor racial groups in the country. The religious composition of the country in 1971, was as follows:- Buddhists 67.4 percent, Hindus 17.6 percent, Muslims 7.1 percent and Christians 7.8 percent of the total population. During the last twenty-five years, internal migration had brought about some change in the racial distribution of the country. The Eastern Province prior to 1946, was mainly settled by Tamils and Moors. But with the agricultural colonization, the Sinhala population increased remarkably. 27,556 Sinhalese were enumerated in the province in 1946 and their number increased to 149,458 in 1971. This gives an increase of 422 percent. The Sinhalese were mainly settled in Galoya, Allai, Kantalai, Morawewa



schemes and this helped to increase their population in the Eastern Province. The Trincomalee district which is part of the Eastern Province may be taken as an example, where these changes have taken place to a significant degree. Table IV shows the population growth by race between 1921 and 1971.

*Table IV*

Year	Sinhalese		Tamils		Moors		Others	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1921	1996	4.3	18586	54.6	12846	37.5	1179	3.6
1946	15706	20.7	33795	44.5	23219	30.6	3206	4.2
1953	15296	18.3	37517	44.9	28616	34.2	2204	2.6
1963	39130	28.9	54050	38.7	42560	30.4	1660	2.0
1971	55308	28.8	73255	38.1	61538	32.1	1888	1.0

Source:- Calculated from Census Reports of Sri Lanka.

The Sinhala population was only 4 percent of the total district population in 1921. But in 1946, their percentage increased to 20.7 percent and in 1971, to 29.8 percent. But at the same time, the Tamil population has declined relatively. However, the Moor population continued to maintain their percentage as a result of a high birth rate.

In the plantation districts, such as Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura and Matale, the population of Sinhala population has been increasing due to the repatriation of Indian Tamils. Further, a sizeable Indian population also moved out from the estate and migrated to Vavuniya and Kilinochchi. There is evidence to show that the Sri Lankan Tamils had increased their percentage only in the city of Colombo. In 1946, the percentage of the Sri Lankan Tamils was 9.8 percent of the city population and the percentage increased to 18.3 percent in 1971. Further, a sizeable Tamil population is found in Dehiwala and Wattala. Tamil population in these places increased after 1946. The multi-racial character of the population appears to be increasing in Sri Lanka. This trend is likely to accelerate further with the expansion of the economy of the country.

The distribution of the population of the country is likely to change with the completion of the Mahaveli Project. Mahaveli Ganga basin covers nearly 4,000 sq.miles. This project will help to develop two areas:- (i) Mahaveli basin below Mahiyangana upto the delta area. (ii) Kalawewa and North Central region. These areas receive water through Mahaveli diversion at Polgolla. The Kalawewa region is already under intensive development. With the completion of all stages of Mahaveli Scheme, 900,000 acres will be brought under irrigation in the Dry Zone and will attract more than 1.5 million people to this area, thus reducing the imbalance in the distribution of population seen in the country.

## References

1. *Year of population censuses of Sri Lanka* - 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1921, 1931, 1946, 1953, 1963 & 1971.
2. *Srimavo-Sastri Pact* an agreement concluded in 1964, between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of India in regard to the status of Indian origin. Under this agreement 300,000 of these persons together with their natural increase will be granted Sri Lankan citizenship, while 525,000 with their natural increase will be repatriated to India.
3. *Srimavo-Indra Pact* an agreement concluded in 1974, between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of India regarding the status of Indian origin not covered by the Srimavo-Sastri Pact. Under this agreement, Government of Sri Lanka will grant citizenship for 75,000 persons of Indian origin and 75,000 will be repatriated to India.
4. From 1-9-1979 onwards, the Government of Sri Lanka introduced Food Stamp Scheme, which replaced the Rice Ration Scheme introduced in February, 1942.
5. Sri Lanka has two climatic zones known as Wet Zone and Dry Zone. Colombo, Kalutara, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Galle, Matara, Kegalla and Ratnapura are regarded as Wet Zone districts. Matale, Hambantota, Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Amparai, Puttalam, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Monaragala and Badulla are regarded as Dry Zone districts.
6. In 1946, there were 20 districts. The district of Chilaw was amalgamated with the district of Puttalam. Three new districts (Polonnaruwa, Amparai & Monaragala) were created.
7. Census of Population, 1971, *Sri Lanka General Report*. Department of Census and Statistics. p. 47.
8. Gavin W. Jones and Selvaratnam S. *Urbanization in Ceylon, 1946-53*, *Modern Ceylon Studies*, Vol. 2, 1970. pp. 199-212.  
Gunatilake, G. "The rural-urban balance and development: *The experience in Sri Lanka*" *Marga*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1973. pp. 35-68.
9. Department of Census and Statistics, *The Population of Sri Lanka*. 1974. p.62.

## DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS AND TAMIL POLITICS (SRI LANKA) \*

N. BALAKRISHNAN

The District Development Councils (DDCs) scheme introduced by the United National Party (UNP) government has generated interest that centred largely around two aspects. On the one hand, it is looked upon as an institutional device for greater administrative decentralisation with a view to promoting better district level planning and development. On the other, on account of the envisaged decentralisation and implied devolution of power—with the Members of Parliament (MPs) and elected members at the district level—the scheme is said to have some relevance and significance vis-a-vis the ‘Tamil problem’ which still remains and unresolved issue in Sri Lankan politics. The paper is mainly concerned with the second aspect and focuses attention on (i) the structural arrangements and the power-relationships between the centre and the districts (ii) the participation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in the scheme and (iii) the major implications for Tamil politics in the context of the basic issues that have figured prominently in recent times.

### **Presidential Commission on the Development Councils.**

Prior to the enactment of the legislation to provide for the DDCs, a Presidential Commission was appointed by the government to report on the scheme. The Commission was entrusted with the principal task of reporting on “the manner in which economic development activity in a district could be planned through the District Minister and the Development Councils”<sup>1</sup> It is significant to note that the TULF, in supporting the decision to set up a Presidential Commission, nominated two well-known personalities to serve as its representatives<sup>2</sup> on the Commission.

The Presidential Commission after its deliberations on the subject of Development Councils could not produce a unanimous report, perhaps because of the political implications of some of the issues involved. The Commission's report had two parts, consisting of the 'main report' and a 'dissent' submitted by one of TULF representatives<sup>3</sup>—both of whom did not sign the main report. The basic disagreement between the main report and the dissenting report stemmed largely from the role envisaged for the DDCs and the District Minister (DM). The main report, considering the constitutional position of the DM<sup>4</sup> and viewing him as an agent of the Centre recommended that the DDCs be headed by the DM. Furthermore, the main report conceded only somewhat reluctantly, it appears, that "if the government considers it necessary the Development Councils may be conferred subordinate law making powers subject to Parliamentary and Ministerial direction and may be incorporated by an Act of Parliament".<sup>5</sup>

The dissenting report in contrast showed a different approach in regard to the role of the DDCs through the intermediary of the DM. It envisaged a DDC scheme with the Council—a democratically constituted body—headed by an elected Chairman and an Executive Committee headed by the DM. The DDCs were envisaged as agencies primarily responsible for planning the development of the district for which subordinate law-making powers—including those to raise revenue by taxation and other means—are shown to be indispensable. The case argued in the dissenting report for a district authority—democratically constituted—directing the administration and development activities with adequate devolution of power may be what the TULF hoped for from the deliberations of the Presidential Commission.

It is interesting to note that many of the provisions of the subsequent Development Councils Act, No. 30, 1980 pertaining to the organisational structure and relationships between the different entities do have a similarity to the principles and arrangements suggested in the dissenting report. However, this conformity in many respects appears to be in form only, devoid of much substance, as the actual power-relationships between the centre and the new district authorities seem to have been weighted more in favour of the agencies of the centre—the District Minister the Minister<sup>6</sup>, the appropriate Minister and, finally, the President.

#### **Development Councils Act and the Structural Arrangements**

The Development Councils Act of 1980 sought to (i) provide the necessary organisational structure (ii) define the powers and functions of different institutions and (iii) determine the power-relationships between the centre and the new district authorities. The DDC scheme, as designed, embodies principally three institutions, namely, (i) the District Minister, (ii) the Executive Committee and (iii) the Development Council.

According to the provisions of the Act pertaining to membership, the DDCs will include (a) the MPs in the district concerned as ex-officio members and (b) elected members whose number, as determined by the President, will be less than the number of MPs for the district.<sup>7</sup> The DDCs so constituted will be headed by an elected Chairman who would have been placed first on the nomination list of the party (or independent group/s) that polled the highest number of votes at the DDC elections. The composition of the DDCs as presently determined no doubt gives a built-in-advantage to the parties—the UNP and the TULF—that already enjoy a majority position in terms of the number of MPs in the districts concerned.

The Executive Committee forms an integral part of the DDC structure. Each DDC will have an Executive Committee—headed by the DM—consisting of the elected Chairman of the Council and two other members of the Council appointed by the DM in consultation with the Chairman. The executive Committee is responsible for the formulation of the 'annual development plan', its implementation and the preparation of the annual budget.

The DM, already a functioning entity at the district level even before the DDC scheme came into operation, becomes key figure linking the centre and the districts, and deriving his authority directly from the President. The DM, being the 'President's man' will be able to exercise considerable authority and power through the Executive Committee over the affairs of the Council. On him falls the main task of harmonizing the district development policies and perspectives with those of the overall government policies and national perspectives. It is also significant to note that the DM is a 'political appointee' of the President—from the government parliamentary group—functioning in the DDC set up with the MPs and elected members at the district level.

A perusal of the structural arrangements of, and the assignment of powers, duties and functions to, the different agencies involved in the DDC structure reveals that on a number of important matters the centre and its agencies retain considerable powers of control and direction at different levels.

The district regional policies and perspectives relating to socio-economic development under the DDC scheme are to be reflected mostly in the formulation and implementation of 'the annual development plan' for each district. In the Act, which has placed much emphasis on the annual development plan, the DDCs have been assigned a wide range<sup>8</sup> of subjects covering all the important areas of socio-economic development. As envisaged, it is through the annual development plan that the DDCs are expected to promote and carry out district level planning and development.

It is laid down in the DCs Act that in respect of all or any of the subjects listed in the First Schedule<sup>9</sup>, the Executive Committee shall consider draft development proposals from the appropriate Minister and formulate other proposals in



consultation with other appropriate Ministers and prepare an annual development plan on the basis of such proposals. Such a plan will then be submitted to the DC for its approval (Section 35 (a)). Further, the DDC after its approval of the annual development plan will then submit such plan to the Minister for his approval and upon approval "such plan shall constitute the annual development plan of the Council for that year" (Section 44). It would appear therefore that the exercise of authority by both the Minister and the appropriate Ministers in dealing with development projects and annual development plan for a district can give them considerable powers of direction and control. In addition., the Centre can also exercise authority and control through its financial allocations on which the DDCs will have to depend a great deal.

The DDCs are given powers of subordinate legislation in regard to taxation and other important matters. However, these are themselves subject to the approval of the Minister, and appropriate Minister and the sanction of Parliament (Section 25). Similarly the powers to raise money through borrowing also requires the approval of both the Minister and the Minister of Finance. Also any donations or other assistance made generally or for any specific projects will have to get the approval of the Minister (Section 19 (2) b).

The section of the DCs Act dealing with 'General control' specifies further powers of control and direction in regard to the activities of the new district authorities. In the exercise of such powers the DM, the Minister (of Local Government) and the President figure prominently again. The DM is duty-bound to report to the President whenever there is a conflict between him and the Executive Committee of the Council over matters concerning "the application of the general policy of the government in the district" (Section 61 (1)). The President has the power to dissolve the Executive Committee when such 'conflicts' are found to be 'irreconcilable'. The President can also remove from office any member of the Executive Committee for 'incompetence' or 'mismanagement' (Section 62 (10) ). Moreover the Minister of Local Government has the power to remove the chairman of a DDC from office or all or any of the elected members of the Council on the grounds of 'incompetence', 'mismanagement', 'persistent default in the performance of duties or 'neglect to comply with any of the provisions of the Act' (Section 63 (i). In the event of the removal of the Chairman from office he will cease to be a member of the council. When all the elected members of the DDC are removed (under section 63(i) ) the other members also cease to function and the DM will "then exercise and perform all powers and duties and functions of the Council until such time as the Minister orders an election to be held to elect new members of the Council (Section 63 (i) (a) and (b). The President also has the powers "to make orders of an administrative nature providing for any unforeseen or special circumstances or for determining or adjusting any question or matter that would arise in connection with the administration of a DDC for which no provision or effective provision has been made in the Act" (Section 94).

Most of the provisions for 'general control' may be used only in exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, they have been incorporated in the Act so that the Centre would be able to exercise its authority at various levels and in different situations, if the need arises. The key issue in any exercise aimed at decentralisation and devolution of authority is the power-relationships between the Centre and the peripheral units. The main legal provisions of the DCs Act now in operation offer no firm assurance of a power-distribution favouring the district units. This may make the DDCs ineffective instruments of regional administration and development.

### **DDCs and the TULF**

The appointment of the Presidential Commission as well as the subsequent legislation, supported by the TULF, led to the belief that this particular exercise in decentralisation and devolution—besides being a general scheme—had "something more" to offer towards redressing Tamil political grievances. The government's view was that the TULF and the Tamils should find much that is acceptable in the scheme—though no specific and explicit policy declaration was made to this effect. The TULF for its part hoped that decentralisation and devolution could result in some measure of 'regional/district autonomy' in the DDC scheme which it felt would be to the advantage of the Tamils and 'Tamil areas'.

The TULF decision to support the DCs Bill in the Parliament and to participate in the working of the scheme was no doubt a significant event in the TULF-centred politics of recent years, indicating the emergence of a 'working arrangement' between the government and the Tamil political leadership. This decision was hailed as a "positive step in the right direction"<sup>10</sup> by the independent national English weekly, the *Tribune*, which may well have reflected the views of the Colombo based Tamils, Tamil business interests and other 'moderate' sections of the Tamils.

After going through a politically troublesome period since the 1977 race riots, followed by the severely unsettled conditions in Jaffna resulting in a state of emergency in 1979<sup>11</sup>—during which the security forces were engaged in "eliminating terrorism"—the TULF leadership seemed to be in a mood to respond to the DDC proposal. It appeared that the informal and intermittent talks between the government and the TULF representatives may have also paved the way for the TULF's decision on the DDC scheme.

The TULF decision to support the DDCs and participate in the working of the scheme has also resulted in serious internal problems for the Front for the first time since its formation. The DDC issue has split the TULF sharply on account of the differences that emerged between—what may be labelled—the 'moderate leadership' on the one hand and the 'activists' and 'radicals' on the other. It would be true to say, however, that the DDC issue only further underlined the differences which have already begun to emerge within the TULF in regard to the

political strategy pertaining to the 'Eelam demand'. With the commitment to 'Tamil Eelam',<sup>12</sup> for which the TULF is said to have received a mandate at the 1977 general elections, the activist and radical groups saw this as the only goal towards which the TULF should work for and they strongly opposed any moves which they considered will dilute or compromise it. Consequently, they expected the TULF leadership to adopt a very definite and uncompromising stand on the commitment towards Eelam. The leadership, however, having had to operate within the limits of mainstream parliamentary politics and considering the bitter experiences that stemmed from the racial disturbances in the recent past, opted for a more flexible and pragmatic approach. Such differences had begun to emerge even before the DDC issue. This issue, however, led to a more open confrontation between the TULF leadership and the 'dissidents'.

The ultimate decision to support the DCs Bill was taken after a much intense and even acrimonious debate within the TULF. The TULF leadership had the support of the entire parliamentary group (though one or two had strong reservations) as well as that of the moderate elements within the organisation and even managed to win over some of the party and youth activists. Nevertheless the decision caused a major rift within the Front because of the hard core of dissidents who opposed the move. This split also began to be felt among the party's constituent groups, such as the youth organisation, party loyalists, politically active expatriate Tamils and others.

The opposition to the DDCs, significantly enough, has been led by an influential and articulate section within the TULF comprising some of the prominent and long-standing members. The public campaign against the leadership on this issue was spear-headed by **Suthanthiran**<sup>13</sup>, which until recently was the TULF's 'official' political weekly in Tamil. The **Suthanthiran**—representing the voice of the dissident groups—actively campaigned against the DDCs and the leadership became the target of attack. All this brought into the open the sharp division of opinion that emerged within the TULF, which also resulted in the expulsion of a few prominent party loyalists. The TULF leadership had to face its biggest challenge from the dissidents since its formation six years ago.

In the public speeches and statements defending their action to support the DDCs—that appeared in the Tamil press—the TULF leaders have often stressed two important matters, namely, 'the development of the Tamil areas' and the 'safeguarding of the Tamil areas'—through the TULF controlled councils. While reiterating the TULF's long-term political commitment, the leaders argued that the DDC scheme could be accepted and worked to develop and safeguard the Tamil areas.

The dissidents on the other hand vehemently criticised the TULF leadership for their acceptance of the "ineffective Development Councils". They maintained that the TULF's participation would divert attention away from what they perceive

as the single-minded commitment and the necessary campaign and struggle to achieve the ultimate political goal—'Tamil Eelam'. The dissidents accused the TULF leadership of having deviated from the political commitment towards Eelam in accepting the DDCs. What appeared to be the crux of the matter to the dissidents and their sympathisers is that the acceptance of the DDCs will weaken the "resolve and commitment of the Tamil people" towards Eelam. Since the DDC issue, the attitudes have hardened and the TULF leadership and the dissidents became openly and irreconcilably divided.

The Tamil political leadership (of the Federal Party) in the past had agreed to some sort of 'regional autonomy' as a basis for 'interim settlement' of the Tamil question. This was at a time when the major political commitments were within the framework of federalism and the idea of a 'separate Tamil nation' or that of the 'right to self-determination' did not gain much currency as today. The regional-councils in the Bandaranaike—Chelvanayagam pact (July 1957) and the 'district councils' in the Dudley Senanayake—Chelvanayagam agreement (March 1965)—both of which were never implemented—were specifically designed to redress the grievances of the Tamils. In both these agreements the principle of 'regional autonomy' in one form or another had been given a place, which has always appealed to the Tamil political leadership. In the light of this past strategy, the TULF leadership felt justified in accepting the DDCs in the present circumstances as an 'interim arrangement'. The TULF is committed to the DDC scheme in the hope that the TULF controlled councils will be able to concentrate on the development of the Tamil areas and establish some degree of authority over their administration—though the existing pattern of power distribution between the centre and the district units in the scheme leaves a good deal to be desired. This appears to be a key area of discussion in the 'peace talks' that went on intermittently during the past eight months between the government and the TULF representatives. Having committed itself to participate in the DDC scheme, the TULF took the election to DDCs seriously and saw in them an opportunity to demonstrate its political standing in the predominantly Tamil areas.

### **DDCs Election and the TULF**

The DDCs election held in June 1981 constituted the first nation-wide elections held after the 1977 general election on the basis of proportional representation. The country's pro-government mass media hailed the DDCs election as a "mini general election".

The procedures and regulations that governed the election of members to the DDCs were set out in the Development Councils Elections Act of 1981. The relevant sections of this Act applied to every DDC constituted under the provisions of the earlier legislation—the Development Councils Act of 1980. The electoral law and procedure for the DDCs election permitted any 'recognised political party'

and 'independent groups' to submit nominations for the election of members—under proportional representation—to the DDCs in each district. This required the submission of the list of candidates arranged in an order of priority by the recognised political parties and independent groups.

The nominations for the elections to all the DDCs in the twenty four districts were received during 20th—27th April 1981. The DDCs elections were fixed for June 4th. Though hailed as a mini general election by the pro-government press, the most significant feature about the DDCs elections—on a national scale—was that not all the recognised political parties contested the elections. Ultimately, only the ruling UNP and the regional TULF became the major contenders, with the Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP) contesting as the most important independent group. Because the main national opposition parties did not enter the polls, the UNP was returned uncontested in the DDCs of seven districts.<sup>14</sup> Thus polling took place on 4th June 1981 only in the other seventeen districts.

The government party contested in all the DDCs in the seventeen districts where polling took place, while the TULF contested in all the seven electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces. The UNP, which faced a challenge from the JVP in the South—though not a serious one—saw the DDCs elections as an opportunity to receive an endorsement of its own political and economic record since 1977. As far as the northern and eastern provinces are concerned, the UNP hoped that it could make political inroads so as to undermine the TULF dominance especially in the north.

The TULF too was keen to demonstrate its electoral standing and was determined to "capture power" in most the DDCs of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The TULF conducted its DDC election campaign pointedly in relation to some well-publicised issues such as the "preservation of the territory of the Tamils" and "economic development of the Tamil areas". These have already figured prominently when the TULF leadership justified its acceptance of the DDC scheme. In its election campaign the TULF leadership stressed the need for the acceptance of the new district authorities to "administer and develop the predominantly Tamil areas". For this it was argued that the TULF should gain control of most DDCs in the predominantly Tamil areas of the northern and eastern provinces. Such an outcome will also be a reaffirmation of the support for the TULF from the majority of the Tamil people.

The UNP's decision to contest all the DDCs in the northern and eastern provinces reflected its keenness to establish a political base—especially in the northern province, and that too in Jaffna—as a counterweight to the TULF. The UNP carried out a well-publicised campaign in the northern and eastern provinces in which several government Ministers participated. Even the Prime Minister's

visit to Jaffna a few months before the the DDCs election appeared to be part of the pre-election campaign. There was no doubt that the government attached a great deal of significance to the DDC polls in the predominantly Tamil districts.

Besides the two major participants—the TULF and the UNP—in the DDC elections in the northern and eastern provinces, the Tamil Congress and three other independent groups also came into the scene. The Tamil Congress contested in all the four districts in the northern province, besides fielding candidates for the Colombo district which, of course, had not much significance. In the regional politics of the Tamils in recent times, in which the 'Tamil nationality question' loomed large, the Tamil Congress has lost its standing among large sections of the Tamil population even before the DDC elections.

In all the electoral districts, other than Jaffna, polling took place under relatively peaceful conditions without serious incidents. In the Jaffna district, however, the election took place against a background of violence, disorder insecurity and tension which resulted in the imposition of a state of emergency on the eve of the DDC elections.

Since the early 1970s the socio-political situation in the Jaffna region became severely and continuously disturbed both by acts of violence or 'political terrorism' by the 'Tamil Tigers' and intensified counter measures, reprisals and arrest by the security forces. These periodically gave rise to panic, tension and insecurity in the region. The DDC election campaign in Jaffna commenced against a background of the unsettled atmosphere that followed the famous Neerveli (Bank) robbery (25th March 1981) reported to be the work of Tamil guerrilla groups. In this daring and successful robbery two Sinhalese policemen died and this led to intensified activity by the security forces. The DDCs election campaign itself contributed to a build up of tension and violence during the month preceding the elections. It was in such a climate that the assassination of the UNP candidate—who headed the party's list for the Jaffna DC—took place. The situation further deteriorated when three policemen on duty at a TULF meeting close to the Jaffna town were shot. One of the policemen, a Sinhalese, died immediately and the and the other, a Tamil, succumbed to the injuries later.

This incident appears to have triggered off the same night—and which continued for two nights that followed—widespread arson and destruction of public and private property in Jaffna town<sup>16</sup> and other places by a section of the additional police force that came to Jaffna in connection with the DDC elections. A few persons also were killed during this period, believed to be by the security personnel. All this led to widespread panic, tension, disorder and lawlessness on the eve of the polls. To add to this some of the TULF MPs—including the TULF leader—were arrested by the security personnel in the early hours of the election morning—reported to have been taken into "protective custody" according to the official



version. They were, however, released soon on the orders of the President. As the law and order situation deteriorated because the normal law enforcement machinery completely broke down resulting in considerable uncertainty and disruption of normal life in the town area, the government imposed a state of emergency and curfew in the Jaffna district.

Such were the circumstances in which the DDCs election came to be held in the Jaffna district. It was subsequently reported that a special Presidential team that visited Jaffna the week prior to the elections, had reported that conditions were not favourable to hold the elections. Notwithstanding this, the government decided to go ahead with the elections and two leading Cabinet Ministers were sent to Jaffna to 'oversee' the conduct of the elections.

The conduct of the DDC elections in Jaffna amidst chaos and tension revealed a disorderly and unsatisfactory state of affairs. It came to be known later that on the evening before the elections, the appointment of several Senior Presiding Officers were revoked and in their place new persons—most of them inexperienced and transported from outside the district in the last minute—were appointed. There were also several irregularities and malpractices during and after polling. It was reported that polling did not commence in time in many centres and polling closed earlier than scheduled in some others. There were also instances where the Presiding Officers—who were probably ignorant of the procedure—did not submit certified statements about the votes cast, after counting them in the respective centres. And the ballot boxes in respect of such centres were not received at the Kachcheri in time and some were not received at all—which still remain unaccounted for. Because of the disorderly situation and the numerous problems encountered, the election results of the Jaffna district were not released until about a week after polling day.<sup>16</sup>

The most notable general feature about the outcome of the DDCs election has been markedly low turn-out<sup>17</sup> especially in the electoral districts outside the northern and eastern provinces. In all the seventeen districts of the island where polling took place, there were altogether 4,931,887 registered voters; of this the total number that polled came to 2,710,102 representing 54.5%. This is a low figure for any nation-wide election and certainly a striking contrast to last general election (1977) when the percentage poll for the whole country was 87. Apart from the 'lower status'<sup>18</sup> that would have been accorded to the DDCs election by the voters, these elections did not generate much interest and enthusiasm especially when the national opposition parties withdrew from the polls and called for a boycott of the elections.

Although voter participation has generally been low at the DDCs election, this appears to be very largely a phenomenon that characterised the districts outside the northern and eastern provinces. In the ten electoral districts outside the

northern and eastern provinces the number that voted out of the total registered voters in percentage terms came to only 50%. The boycott campaign by the opposition parties could have contributed to this strikingly very low percentage poll. In contrast, the electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces recorded considerably higher voter participation—71% for the northern province and 75% for the eastern province. However, it is worth noting that these are themselves lower percentages compared to the last general election when the northern and eastern provinces recorded in aggregate terms 82% and 88% respectively.

The voter-participation in the northern and eastern province also revealed marked differences between some districts at the DDCs election. In particular, the Jaffna district had the lowest voting percentage—69%—for the whole of the northern and eastern provinces. The highly disturbed conditions that prevailed in Jaffna on the eve of the DDC election would have contributed to a lower polling rate. In the other districts of this region, the voting percentages varied from 73% (Mullaitivu) and 85% (Mannar). While the polling percentages in all the electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces at the DDCs election have been lower than what they were at the last general election, the difference in some districts—Jaffna, Amparai and Trincomalee—became very marked. It is likely that in the Amparai and Trincomalee districts the opposition boycott campaign may have had some effect because of the SLFP votes.

In the electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces the contest was really between the TULF and the UNP and the outcome had significant implications in regard to the TULF—centred Tamil politics. In the electoral districts of this region, the TULF altogether polled 468,560 votes, which represented 62% of the total votes polled and 45% of the total registered voters. In contrast the UNP received a total of 225,741 votes which constituted 30% of the total poll and 22% of the total number of registered voters.

The performance of the TULF (as well as the UNP) at the DDCs election has differed a good deal in the various electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces, which also reflected the varied ethnic composition<sup>19</sup> of the electoral districts concerned. The Jaffna district which has a very substantial Sri Lankan Tamil population assumed special importance in the TULF—centered politics and the DDCs election.

On account of the violence and destruction unleashed by the security forces a few days before polling, anti-government feeling ran high among the voters in Jaffna. This made the prospects for the UNP—which looked somewhat better earlier—bleak as far as the Jaffna district was concerned.

At the Jaffna district DC election the TULF received in all 263,360 votes which constituted 57% of the total registered vote (463,414) and 82% of the total votes polled (320,337)—see Table 1. This undoubtedly gave an overwhelming victory for the TULF which gained all the ten seats in the Jaffna DDC. It may

Table 1. DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS

Districts	(1) Total No. Voters	(2) Total Votes Polled	(3) 2/1 (%)	(4) TULF Votes	(5) 4/1 4/2 (%)	(6) UNP Votes	(7) 6/1 6/2 (%)	(8) Tamil Con- gress Votes	8/1 8/2 (%)	No. of Seats Won TULF-UNP
1. Jaffna	463,414	320,337	69.1	263,369	56.8 82.2	23,302	5.0 7.2	21,682	4.6 6.7	10 —
2. Mullaitivu	31,802	23,094	72.1	13,815	43.4 59.9	8,451	26.5 36.6	650	—	02 02
3. Vavuniya	38,011	29,819	79.1	18,048	47.4 60.5	10,976	26.2 36.8	268	—	02 02
4. Mannar	38,680	32,852	84.9	16,459	42.5 50.1	14,713	30.2 43.5	1,511	—	02 02
(2+3+4)	(108,493)	(85,765)	(79.1)	(48,322)	(44.5) (56.2)	(34,140)	(31.5) (39.8)	(2,429)	—	— —
5. Batticaloa	157,765	126,756	80.3	74,302	47.0 58.6	34,664	21.9 27.3	—	—	02 01
6. Trincomalee	119,872	88,734	74.1	44,692	37.3 50.3	42,388	35.3 47.6	—	—	01 01
7. Amparai	185,286	132,777	71.6	37,875	20.4 28.5	91,247	49.2 68.7	—	—	01 03
(5+6+7)	(462,923)	(348,267)	(74.8)	(156,869)	(34.3) (45.1)	(168,299)	(35.0) (48.3)	—	—	— —
Total (1-7)	1,034,830	754,369	72.8	468,560	45.2 62.1	225,741	21.8 29.9	—	—	20 11

Source: Commissioner of Elections, published in the Sun, 20 June 1981.

Note: Independent Groups polled 7646 votes and 16,698 votes in Jaffna and Batticaloa districts respectively.

be worth recalling that at the last general election the TULF obtained more or less the same percentage of the registered vote (58%) as at the DDC election—securing 72% of the poll—with a much higher voter participation of 81% compared to the 69% at the June DDC election.

The UNP polled 23,202 votes at the Jaffna DDC election—slightly higher than what the Tamil Congress received—which represented 5% of the total registered vote and 7% of the total poll. For a Tamil party which has had a long association in Tamil politics, the Tamil Congress did very badly at the DDC election. It received in all 24,111 votes in the northern province. Of this, 21,682 votes were received in the Jaffna district, constituting 4.6% of the registered vote and 6.7% of the total votes polled. The Tamil Congress also polled 12,386 votes in the Colombo district which formed just 3% of the total votes cast. The two independent groups in the Jaffna district together polled only 7646 votes which constituted a mere 2% of the total votes polled.

The TULF performance in the other electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces would have been influenced by the more varied ethnic character of the electorates and the far greater challenge offered by its rival, the UNP, because the latter had an already established base in many of these districts. The more mixed ethnic composition of the electoral districts can have significant implications for the performance of the TULF whose appeal is confined to Tamil and to a lesser extent, Tamil speaking voters. The UNP on the other hand has been able to appeal to non-Tamil voters, Tamil speaking non-Tamil voters and Tamil voters. In the three electoral districts of Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar taken as a whole, the extent of voter participation at the DDCs election was 78%—though for the individual districts it varied between 73% and 85%. In the three districts taken together the TULF received 45% (48,322) of the total number of registered voters (108,493) and 56% of the total votes polled (85,765). Of the three districts, the TULF did very well in the Vavuniya and Mullaitivu districts. In the Vavuniya district the total votes that the TULF received constituted 47% of the total registered votes and 60% of the total votes cast. In the Mullaitivu district the corresponding percentages came to 43% and 60%. In the Mannar district with a considerably higher voter participation (85%) the TULF received 43% of the total registered vote and 50% of the total poll. In regard to the TULF's share in total poll the percentage recorded for the Mannar district is the lowest in the electoral districts of the northern province. The TULF won two seats in each of these three electoral districts and the Chairmanships of the DDCs also went to the TULF as the party that polled the highest number of votes.

The fact that the TULF had to contend with a greater UNP presence, politically, in the northern province outside the Jaffna district is demonstrated by the UNPs performance in the Mannar district and to a lesser extent in the Vavuniya and Mullaitivu districts. In all these three districts taken together the UNP has received 32% of the registered vote and 40% of the total votes polled. The UNP did better

in the Mannar district probably because of a significant muslim vote. It received 30% of the total registered vote and 44% of the total poll. In the Mullaitivu district the UNP votes represented 27% of the registered vote and 37% of the total votes cast and the respective percentages are almost the same for the Vavuniya district. The UNP secured two seats in each of the three districts—equal number as the TULF. It is important to note that of the UNP candidates elected to the DDCs in the three districts five are Tamils and one is a muslim (Mannar).

In the electoral districts of the eastern province, out of the total number of registered voters amounting to 462,923 the total number that polled came to 348,267 i.e. 75%. Of the three districts taken individually only Batticaloa recorded a voting percentage of 80% while Trincomalee and Amparai districts recorded 74% and 72% respectively. Although all the three districts recorded lower voter participation in the 1981 DDC elections compared to the 1977 general election, the difference as already noted, appeared to be most marked in regard to Trincomalee and Amparai districts only.

The TULF's position in the DDCs election in the districts of the eastern province as a whole showed that it received a total of 156,869 votes representing 34% of the total number of registered voters (462,923) and 45% of the total votes polled (348,267). Compared to this, the UNP's position is marginally better as it secured 35% of the registered vote and 48% of the total votes cast—largely because of the outcome in the Amparai district. The TULF did very well in the Batticaloa district—receiving 47% of the registered vote and 59% of the total poll compared to 22% and 27% respectively for the UNP. In the Trincomalee district which has a more 'mixed' ethnic composition the TULF obtained 37% of the registered vote and 50% of the total poll, while the UNP's position came almost closer to that of the TULF with 35% of the registered vote and 48% of the total poll. In the Amparai district, where Tamils constitute only 22% of the population, the UNP, as expected did very well and it received 49% of the total registered vote and 69% of the total votes cast. The TULF received 20% of the registered voters and 28% of the total votes polled.

It is interesting to observe that soon after the DDCs election results for the eastern province were released, the UNP leader and President commenting on the party's performance, pointedly made a reference to the effect that the SLFP had supported the 'separatists' in the Trincomalee district and other districts of the eastern province.<sup>20</sup> This statement would seem to make sense in view of the fact that the TULF's share of the registered vote and total poll in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts increased at the DDC elections—which had a lower turnout—compared to the position at the last general election.<sup>21</sup> During the DDC election campaign in the eastern province there appeared to have been some understanding that the SLFP would support anti-government forces, and therefore, the TULF, after SLFP's withdrawal from the DDC polls. It was also reported that during the DDC election campaign in the eastern province, prominent SLFP supporter

campaigned for the TULF candidates. Thus it is likely that "some votes which went to a party other than the UNP in 1977 were switched to the TULF in 1981" <sup>22</sup> This could have happened to some extent despite the boycott campaign.

The TULF won two seats in the Batticaloa DC and its chairmanship, while the UNP won one seat. In the Trincomalee district, the TULF won one seat as well as the chairmanship of the DC and the UNP also gained one seat. In the Amparai DC the UNP took three seats and the chairmanship and one seat went to the TULF.

Although the TULF won more seats in the Batticaloa district and captured the chairmanship in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee DCs the UNP has a majority in the them, because it has more MPs in both districts. This can have significant implications for the functioning of the DDCs when the chairman belongs to a rival political party from that of the MPs and other elected members who can jointly constitute a majority. Thus taking into account the total membership of the DDCs in the northern and eastern provinces including the MPs, the TULF has a majority and therefore will have 'effective control' only in the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Mannar. In the Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Amparai districts, the UNP will have a majority and therefore effective control, even though the TULF elected members hold the chairmanships in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee DDCs

In the districts of Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Mannar the TULF and the UNP have equal representation in terms of elected members. But since the MPs belong to the TULF the latter has a majority in these DDCs. In the Jaffna district all the MPs and elected members of the DDC belong to the TULF. For this and other reasons, the Jaffna DDC may become the focal point of TULF activity.

#### **Post — DDCs Election Phase**

The TULF victory at the Jaffna DDC election was overshadowed by the public concern and reaction over the 'June disturbances'. The violence, destruction and extensive damage caused by a section of the government security forces which came to be also described as 'state terrorism' <sup>23</sup> — became the number one issue and received wide publicity outside the country as well. Reflecting the mood of the public, the TULF leadership adopted a strong stand against the government amounting to what appeared to be one of direct political confrontation. The tragic events of May/June became the subject of a lengthy statement and protest in Parliament by the TULF leadership when the first opportunity came after the DDCs election. As a protest move against the government, the TULF announced its decision to boycott parliamentary sittings until adequate measures are taken by the government in relation to the "five demands" placed before it. The demands presented were as follows. (1) the removal of the police force responsible for causing the troubles, and arrangements to have 75% Tamil Muslim police force as well as officers in charge of police stations and senior police officers in Tamil



speaking areas, (ii) the establishment of Home Guards in each district under the DDCs to act in conjunction with the police to safeguard lives and property, (iii) the withdrawal of the army personnel responsible for the killing and looting. (iv) permitting an international body like the Amnesty International or International Commission of Jurists to inquire into the events from May 31-June 8 and violations of human rights in Jaffna and (v) the identification and punishment of the miscreants responsible for, and compensation for the victims of, the June disturbances.

The government was willing to consider some of these demands and others in parts. But it refused to consider the demand relating to an International Commission of inquiry. The government agreed instead to the appointment of a local Commission of inquiry to deal with events only from May 31st to June 2nd, thus excluding the events covered by the emergency and relating to the conduct of the DDC election—the plausible reason being that any inquiry into the incidents after June 2nd may have proved most embarrassing to the government. Some of the demands placed by the TULF formed the basis of the later negotiations that took place between the government and the TULF representatives.

Meanwhile the situation in the country started deteriorating as it moved towards another outburst of racial violence directed against the Tamils in August. This was preceded by a politically significant event—and formed a prelude to the August (1981) communal violence—namely, the vote of no confidence on the TULF leader as the Leader of the Opposition. Though this motion was introduced in Parliament on the initiative of the government back-benchers it could not have proceeded without the concurrence of the high-command; and the 'sinhala chauvinist wing' in the UNP appears to have played an active role. The debate in Parliament was confined to the government parliamentary group, as no opposition members participated. The debate—without precedent—was a display, on the part of some of the government parliamentarians of virulent anti-Tamil sentiments directed against the TULF leader. The anti-Tamil sentiments expressed by some of the government back-benchers in their 'indictment' of the leader of the opposition and the publicity it received may have played its part in increasing racial animosity. The racial violence that erupted in August (1981) directed against the Tamils—including the Indian Tamils—led to several deaths, widespread arson and looting in many parts of the country. It appeared that organised gangs with alleged involvement of some government party men have been behind the instigation of racial violence in certain parts of the country.

With the 'June disturbances' in Jaffna, followed by the race riots in the country in August—second since the present government came to power—the government's image in regard to law and order and stability suffered considerably. The Indian press gave wide publicity to the August communal violence partly because a large number of Indian Tamils became victims—and this probably sparked

off the anti-government demonstrations in Tamil Nadu. The government's normal law enforcement machinery became ineffective and a state of emergency had to be declared to bring the racial troubles under control.

It was in the wake of the 1981 communal violence that the government initiated moves towards negotiations with the TULF and the latter responded. Since then, these high-level 'peace talks' have gone on intermittently between both sides. The negotiations appear to have covered a number of important matters—some of which centred around the "five demands" earlier put forward by the TULF—including those relating to the "effective implementation" of the DDCs. The DDCs have already been found ineffective in many respects, most of which attributed to "inadequate powers" and "inadequate funds". The TULF sought to remedy this through its negotiations with the government. The government TULF dialogue that has taken place during past ten months or so resulted in some improvement in the political relationship between the two sides. With this, the TULF ended its earlier boycott of the parliamentary proceedings. The TULF also, it appeared had kept a distance from the other national opposition parties during this phase of 'rapprochement' with the government. While this 'accord' is described as "the most significant step forward in government—TULF relations since the UNP took office", it is also noted—not without justification—that this may be no more than "a temporary trace".<sup>24</sup>

There is no assurance that the government—TULF accord will last long since it may be subject to stresses and strains that could develop possibly out of the volatile—and even potentially explosive—political situation likely to be experienced in the north, especially Jaffna. The socio-political climate in the Jaffna region will be determined largely by the policies and actions of the politically active organisations and groups—including the 'Tamil underground'—and how the government (and its security forces) will react to such developing situations.

The TULF, no doubt, is the dominant political entity with still a secure electoral base particularly in the north. Yet it cannot be said that it now enjoys the same level of popularity and support—the DDCs election performance notwithstanding—as it did some years back. Any observer of the current political scene in the Jaffna region will not fail to notice that there has been some disenchantment with, and even a growing opposition to, the TULF. What is most significant to note is that this growing resentment with the TULF policy—of negotiations with the government for 'concessions'—has emanated from some of its own constituent groups, especially youths, who had been hitherto loyal to the TULF leadership. To that extent, there would have been some erosion of the TULF support base in the north during the past year or so.

The Tamil radical youths and other activists who are committed Eelamists—and who had earlier operated under the TULF political umbrella—now feel that they had been let down by the TULF leadership on the Eelam issue. The growing

dissatisfaction with the TULF can be seen especially in the political campaign and activities now centred around the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF), which is a breakaway group from the TULF after the latter decided to accept the DDCs.

The new Front now appears to be a major rallying point for the dissident groups disillusioned with the TULF. The TELF—headed by prominent persons who had been in both the Federal Party and, its successor, the TULF—is now trying to project itself as an alternative—‘Liberation Front’—to the TULF engaging itself in campaign and agitation in support of Tamil Eelam. <sup>25</sup> The TELF as it is presently organised—though is yet to find a sound and dynamic leadership—appears to derive its strength due to the support from the dissident youth and student groups, which are either strongly critical of, or are vehemently apposed to, the TULF. Thus the TELF, in alliance with the other dissident groups, had made things, politically, very difficult for the TULF and its leadership could not just ignore it and had to take a serious note of this developing situation. In May this year, the TELF together with some of the other dissident youth and student groups organised a partially successful one day **hartal** in the Jaffna town as a protest against the participation of the TULF MPs in the ceremonial opening of the new Parliament at Sri Jayawardenapura. About this, it has been remarked, significantly enough, that “this is the first time that a hartal against the TULF has been observed in Jaffna”. <sup>26</sup> This gave a fair indication of the dissatisfaction with the TULF. Both the TULF and the TELF are now engaged in mutual recrimination in public and, it appears that polarisation of forces is almost complete. <sup>27</sup> This tendency it is important to note, has now also spread to the ranks of the politically active expatriate Tamil Eelamists, who for the past decade or so had helped considerably to ‘internationalise’ the Sri Lankan Tamil problem. There is now amongst them, an influential section—with a very strong pro-separatist stand—which is extremely critical of the present TULF leadership and identifies itself openly with the TELF and other dissident groups in the north.

With the Eelam cry and ‘Tamil insurgency’ spotlight has also shifted to the arena outside the mainstream politics in the north. It is in this context that the actions and role of the ‘Tamil separatist guerrillas’—named the ‘Tamil Liberation Tigers’—assume considerably significance. The Tamil Liberation Tigers, officially labelled as ‘terrorists’, had been operating for the past seven years or so and they are now a proscribed organisation under the government anti-terrorist laws. Since this organisation functions as a clandestine group no reliable information is available about it. The Tamil Liberation Tigers appear to be a small, tough and dedicated group of Eelamists—some of them are reported to have had training abroad—committed to a guerrilla-type armed resistance, with north as their base and Tamil Nadu as a hide-out base. According to available information, the Liberation Tigers had been responsible for the killing of policemen, police intelligence personnel, suspected police informants, political opponents, and several bank

robberies. Such politically motivated acts of violence and the strong counter measures by the government security forces had made the situation periodically very unstable in Jaffna and political stability in the region has become a thing of the past.

No accurate information is available about the kind of relationship that would have existed in the past between the guerrillas and the TULF. It was generally believed that there had been some links between the TULF politicians or at least some of them, and the Liberation Tigers. Some in government circles even believed that the 'Tigers' formed a 'secret arm' of the TULF.

Many of the militants who may now be in the 'Tiger movement' would have been associated with TULF politics in the past. Having operated under the TULF umbrella—as members of its grass roots organisations—the most dedicated of the militants would have constituted the nucleus of the underground resistant group/s that came to be formed. Several of those who now form part of the Liberation Tigers would have been, at one time or another, involved with the earlier mass political campaigns organised by the TULF and therefore would have developed closer links with the TULF politicians and such associations would have continued over the years. However, whatever links that existed, it would seem that the Liberation Tigers had operated mostly on their own without having been directly under the influence of the TULF politicians. At the same time, one cannot rule out the possibility that those TULF politicians who were in close touch with the grass roots level organisations would have had some knowledge—including perhaps the identity of the leaders—of the Liberation Tigers. For some time the TULF had turned a blind eye to the acts of 'political violence' for which the Liberation Tigers were held to be responsible. But the TULF leadership could not for long adopt such an ambivalent attitude. It changed its policy and more recently had begun to openly condemn and completely dissociate itself from the acts of violence committed by the Liberation Tigers. This undoubtedly was an important turning point in TULF politics. It signified a decision to sever whatever association that would have existed between the TULF politicians and the Tamil underground or sections within it and to dispel the cloud of suspicion that hung over the TULF on this question.

The present government had been engaged in the task of "eliminating terrorism" in the north, especially Jaffna, since 1979. But this led to only a limited success initially. The Liberation Tigers, being a small group—the hardcore probably numbering not more than two hundred—had their safe hide-outs in South India where they sought refuge whenever situation in the north became difficult due to the intensified activities of the security personnel. It cannot be claimed that the Liberation Tigers have substantial support from the Tamil public in general—other than among youths and other radical elements. Nevertheless, the general public has shown much sympathy and even some admiration for them partly as a reaction to the presence and behaviour of the security forces. Sympathy for the

guerrillas, fear of reprisals from them and some admiration for them had all made the general public the silent—in more than one sense—spectators of the periodic and violent confrontations between the guerrillas and the government security forces. During the past year or so, however, the Liberation Tigers appear to have suffered some setbacks. The government security forces were able to make a significant break-through in their operations against the Tamil insurgents. Several Tamil youths, allegedly involved in terrorist activities in the north have been arrested and kept under incommunicado detention—with allegations of torture as well—under the draconian provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Also for the first time, the Tamil underground groups have shown signs of internecine conflict between rival factions.<sup>28</sup> This has brought to light what appears to be the emergence of serious internal crisis within the ranks of the Liberation Tigers.

Apart from the TULF, the TELF, other dissident youth and student groups and the Liberation Tigers are entities that now matter very much in the Tamil (Eelam) politics<sup>29</sup> of the north. Although the TULF is still the most dominant force in terms of mainstream politics and electoral strength the other groups have become increasingly important in terms of the impact they could have through their policies and actions on the socio-political scene in the region. The TELF and the other dissident youth and student groups now carry on their campaign and agitation not only in regard to the Eelam demand but also against the TULF leadership. They also express support to the Liberation Tigers and possibly there are links between the latter and some of the dissident youth and student groups. The TULF leadership has openly expressed its disagreement with, and condemnation of, political violence as a method used by the Liberation Tigers. It has also found it necessary to defend its present policy (of negotiations with the government) which is under attack from the dissident groups—most of whom were its loyal supporters not long ago. It is against such a politically complex and volatile background that one has to see the implications of the government—TULF dialogue. For the TULF this signified an attempt to reach a 'political understanding' with the government—on the basis of some important issues of immediate relevance<sup>30</sup>—without as the TULF saw it, compromising on basic and long-term goals. Of the issues that figured in the government—TULF negotiations, the TULF no doubt attached greatest importance to those that dealt with the reform of the DDCs. It appears that the major reform anticipated in the DDC structure is concerned with the delegation of Ministerial powers—on the subjects that came within the purview of the DDCs—to the Executive Committees of the DDCs via the District Ministers. How adequate and meaningful this proposed reform could be still remains to be seen. Whether this will ensure that measure of decentralisation, devolution of authority and 'district autonomy' that the TULF was keen to get through the DDCs can be a matter for conjecture. Whatever reforms that are contemplated at this stage in regard to the DDCs, very little will be made effective before the elections—either a Presidential election or parliamentary election generally expected to take place by the end of this year or early next year.



Neither the DDCs nor the Government—TULF 'reconciliation' had contributed to any significant improvement in the political climate in the north. On the contrary the political atmosphere remains highly charged, due to the dissensions and disagreements—and the sharpening antagonism—between the TULF and the dissident groups, the arrests and detention of many youths and the sporadic confrontations between the 'Tigers' and the security forces. Given this prevailing climate it is likely that the government—TULF dialogue and the understanding reached thus far may run into serious difficulties—as there are already signs of this—in the context of the harsh political realities in the region.

\* Revised and enlarged version of an earlier seminar paper on the Development Council submitted the Social Scientists Association, Colombo.

### REFERENCE :

1. Report of the *Presidential Commission on Development Councils*, Sessional Paper, 1980, p.3.
2. Prof. A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam were the two TULF nominees who served on the Commission. Both have been closely associated with the TULF and served as its most trusted representatives on the Commission. They have also played a key role in paving the way for the subsequent TULF government dialogue that took place during the past ten months or so.
3. Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam submitted his own proposals which formed a separate part of the report finally submitted to the President.
4. The present government replaced the District Political Authorities, introduced by the previous government, with the District Minister system with formal powers and constitutional status.
5. *Presidential Commission Report*, p. 108.
6. In relation to the DDCs 'the Minister' refers to Minister of Local Government.
7. Exception to this would be a district or districts where the number of MPs is less than three; in which case the President specifies the number of elected members which together with the number of MPs will not exceed five.
8. The First Schedule of the Act listed the following subjects: Agrarian Services; Agriculture; Animal Husbandary; Co-operative Development; Cultural Affairs; Education; Employment; Fisheries; Food; Health Services; Housing; Irrigation Works (excluding those of an inter district character); Land use and Land settlement; Rural Development; Small and Medium Scale Industries.
9. The DDCs are permitted to formulate development schemes in respect of subjects not included in the First Schedule with the approval of the appropriate Minister and the concurrence of the Minister.



10. *Tribune*, August 7, 1980, Colombo.
11. For a review of the important events connected with this, See *Emergency* 79, published by the Movement for Inter-racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE), May 1980.
12. The TULF's formal commitment to Tamil Eelam came with the adoption of the political resolution at its first national convention held on 14.5.1976, which resolved that "the restoration and reconstitution of the free, sovereign, secular socialist state of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent to every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in the Country".
13. For a long time, the Tamil weekly *Suthanthiran*, started by the late leader S. J. V. Chelvanayagam, had been the authentic voice of the Federal Party and then its successor, the TULF—until very recently. It now represents mostly the views of the dissidents and is very critical of the present TULF leadership. To counter the political propaganda carried out by *Suthanthiran*, the TULF started its own weekly named *Uthayasuriyan*. Its printing press was destroyed along with the TULF headquarters during the June disturbances in Jaffna. A new weekly, *Senkathir* has now been started by the TULF.
14. The UNP was returned uncontested in the following electoral districts; Nuwara Eliya; Matara; Moneragala; Kegalle; Kandy; Kurunegala; and Ratnapura.
15. Among the premises burnt and/or destroyed within the Jaffna town, the most prominent were: the Jaffna Public Library (with several irreplaceable volumes) The TULF headquarters; printing press and buildings of *Elanadu*, the only regional Tamil daily in Jaffna; the residence of the Jaffna M.P.; and the old Market in the heart of the town.
16. The legality of Jaffna DC election has been challenged in the courts on the grounds of irregularities and malpractices in the conduct of the election. The case is still pending.
17. For a review of the DDCs election results and the UNP's performance at the national level, see S.W.R.de A. Samarasinghe and C. R. de Silva: "The Development Council Election of 1981: Its Political and Electoral implications" Seminar Paper, Ceylon Studies Seminar, Marga Institute, and Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, July 1981; and W. A. Wisawarnapala and Dias Hewagama: "Electoral Politics in Sri Lanka—A Study of the Development Councils Elections", *The Indian Journal of Political Studies*, July 1981.

Apart from the low turn out, there were also unusually large amount of 'spoilt votes' at the DDCs elections in the electoral districts outside the northern and eastern provinces. Rejected votes as percentage of total polled in all districts outside the northern and eastern provinces came to 8%; the corresponding percentage for the electoral districts in the northern and eastern province was 1.5%. On this see Wisawarnapala and Dias Hewagama op.cit.

18. It is likely that the DDC election may have been seen by the electorate as something more than a mere local government election, but may not have been treated as being on par with a general parliamentary election. The non-participation of the national opposition parties would have also been a significant factor in the poor response in many electoral districts. For these and other reasons, the comparison of the voting pattern in the 1981 DDCs election and the 1977 general election has its limitations.
19. In all the districts of the northern and eastern provinces, other than Amparai while the Sri Lankan Tamils constitute the largest ethnic group their proportion in total district population has varied—ranging from the highest in Jaffna (95%) to the lowest in Trincomalee (35%).

Tamil speaking moors formed one-fourth of the district population in Mannar and Batticaloa and much more in Trincomalee (32%) and Amparai (45%). The Sinhalese population becomes numerically significant only in the three districts of Vavuniya (17%), Trincomalee (29%) and Amparai (30%).

20. The President is reported to have said this: 'Let the rank and file of the SLFP and the rest of the country know that Eelam has received support from the present SLFP leadership, particularly in Trincomalee and the rest of the Eastern province'. *Ceylon Daily News*, June 13 1981.
21. The SLFP received nearly one-fourth of the total poll in the Trincomalee district and slightly more than that in the Batticaloa district at the last general election.
22. S. W. R. de A. A. Samarasinghe and C. R. de Silva, op., cit.
23. See *What Happened in Jaffna: Days of Terror*, A MIRJE publication, July 1981, Colombo.
24. *Lanka Guardian*, November 15, 1981.
25. TELF spokesman have declared that they are not interested in parliamentary politics, but are committed to conduct campaign and agitation outside this arena through peaceful and non-violent means.
26. *Saturday Review*, May 1, 1982, Jaffna.
27. In the TULF—TELF confrontation, the position of Mr. S.C. Chandraharsan a prominent TULF personality, son of the late leader S. J. V. Chelvanayagam and legal secretary of the TULF, remains controversial. He is a hardliner in the TULF and has been known to have disagreed with the leadership on a number of issues; he lends support to the TELF and other dissidents and also speaks up for the Tamil youths in detention.
28. The internal feuding is reported to be between two groups identified as 'Uma Maheswaran group' and 'Prabhakaran group'.
29. The Tamil congress in the north still has a place in Tamil politics though its position on the Eelam issue is not very clear. Mention also may be made of the Tamil Self Rule Party—a splinter group from the earlier Federal Party,—which is totally committed to separation. But its influence is very marginal.

There are leftist (Marxist) groups, affiliated to the national parties, operating in the north belonging to both the 'traditional left' and 'new left'. The new left seems to have more following now in the north partly because of its more appealing stand on the Tamil nationality question. It appears that some of the dissident youth and student activists in the north also have a Marxist orientation. Consequently, it is possible that they would have established links with radical Marxist parties or groups in the country outside the north.

30. It has been alleged that the TULF — in its negotiations with the government—had agreed to a moratorium on Eelam. But this has been denied by the leadership.

It was stated by the TULF leader that the negotiations had the following objectives: (i) to solve the immediate problems of the Tamils and protect them from recurring racial violence, (ii) to get the support of all the political parties in the country to put an end to the recurrence of racial violence and (iii) to take action for the effective implementation of the DDC Act to enable the fruitful functioning of the elected councils, *Saturday Review*, April 3, 1982, Jaffna.

## Review

K. M. de Silva: **A HISTORY OF SRI LANKA**  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1981.

The recent publication of “A History of Sri Lanka” by Dr. K. M. de Silva, Professor of Sri Lankan History of the University of Peradeniya has been described as a notable publishing event. Nobody would gainsay this. It has filled a much-felt need. We have had very few publications of this kind of writing since the establishment of University education in this country in 1922.

The University of Ceylon History of Ceylon edited by Professor H. C. Ray and published in 1959 did not go beyond the fifteenth century. This formed Volume I of an intended comprehensive edition. Since then Volume II, covering the nineteenth century and edited by Professor K.M. de Silva had appeared in 1973. Volume III has still to see the light of day. The pace and quality of modern research in the sciences, especially in geology, anthropology and archaeology, and in the study of epigraphical and literary records call for reassessment and re-writing of history from time to time, and at much shorter intervals than were necessary before.

As “comprehensive general survey” of Sri Lanka’s history de Silva’s book could justly claim to be the only work that could bear comparison with Emerson Tennent’s *Ceylon*, which ran into five editions in one year in 1860. That was an encyclopaedic product. It remains, and will always remain, a classic. But it is of no use as a text-book today. We have had no suitable text book these many decades.

K.M. de Silva has now met this challenge and it is heartening that at long last a son of the soil has been able to draw out from his amazing stock of experience and knowledge such a sober, balanced, and as far as humanly possible, truthful story of this country’s past – a glorious one to be sure, despite the dark patches and shadows which every country’s history contains.

At this stage we should not fail to mention **two comparatively very small volumes, A Short History of Ceylon** by H.W. Codrington and **The Early History Of Ceylon**, by G.C.Mendis, both published in the early thirties. Their authors have left enduring names as pioneers of scientific history-writing in Sri Lanka.

It is unfortunate that another work which aspired to enter into the same category, **A Concise History of Ceylon** by Dr. S. Paranavitana and Mr. C. W. Nicholas (1961) and had gained the imprimatur of the University of Ceylon Press was found unacceptable by scholars, for valid reasons better unrecalled here. A Sinhalese translation of this work offered for publication was rejected by a team of scholars of the University at Peradeniya.

Two thousand five hundred years of crowded history have come to us now in a single volume of six hundred pages. The author had engaged himself in a formidable and almost forbidding task. He has brought within the confines of a mere one hundred and thirty two pages the long and varied history of Sri Lanka from its legendary past to the decline of the Sinhala kingdom in the seventeenth century, a stretch of over two thousand years; but he gets into his stride when he deals, as only he could, with British rule and its aftermath of national independence that had taken a bare one hundred and seventy years. This covers more than one half of the book. One is thus tempted to describe this history as lop-sided.

But it is not so. Almost all that is that is known today of the pre-history and proto-history of Sri Lanka has been compressed into less than sixty pages. Herein lies the skill and competence of the author who seems to have had recourse to recent researches. Even so, this early period is still a matter for conjecture. De Silva admits, quoting from Dr.S.P.F.Senaratne that there is no archaeological evidence to point to a North Indian settlement. Senaratne was the first authority to say so categorically and if this lead is followed, as is being done now by other scholars, the consequences to the Vijayan story that had been so laboriously built up and embellished through the centuries will be disastrous. One is at a loss to determine the original home of these mythical North Indian Aryans. The experts are at sixes and sevens with regard to the origin of even the Sinhala language.

The discovery first made by a field officer the late Mr G.H. Arthur De Silva, under Dr. R.L.Brohier of the Survey Department in the early twenties, of an ancient megalithic burial site at Pomparippu(which is duly recorded by De Silva) opened up a new line of research. We have since come to know that the whole island, from the north to the south and from the west to the east, is covered with relics of megalithic burials and monuments. They could probably be dated from as far back as 600 B C up to 200 A. D.

We find a similar phase of megalithic culture in South India. We do not get this in North India. Could it be that a single matrix of culture had bound South India and Sri Lanka in the past. There is a great deal that we find common

to both, anthropologically and culturally. The Sinhalese and Tamils, it would seem, are ethnically very close to each other, if not identical; and both appear to be ethnically closer to South Indians than to any other people in the world.

Like all history this book views the the past from the present. It is therefore coloured by the prejudices of the present. This is inevitable. It is the ideal man who could produce an ideal history. The biggest problem that has always confronted Sri Lanka is what may be called the national problem of the relationship between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in the country. Very often we fight shy of facing it. But de Silva has at least shown a sober awareness of this pervasive problem throughout his work.

When the Western powers first came to rule this land there were three independent kingdoms and some small chieftainships. The Portuguese destroyed the Jaffna Kingdom after a grim battle, and then the Dutch and British gradually completed the foreign conquest of the entire island, the Sinhalese having ceded the Kandyan Kingdom to His Britanic Majesty.

At the onset of British rule, Hugh Cleghorn, "the agent by whose instrumentality the island of Ceylon was annexed to the British Empire" wrote in 1799 his famous Minute on Justice and Revenue that "two different nations from a very ancient period have divided between them the possession of the island". He was only repeating that de Queyroz the Portuguse historian had stated in 1687.

The British, it must be conceded, had made a genuine effort in the course of years to weld these two "nations" together and integrate them into a single national unit. This was found not very difficult, as the basic culture that was revealed after scratching the surface was one and the same.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the concept of a single Ceylonese nationality began to prevail, as we note from the tenour of de Silva's work, with Tamils such as Mutu coomaraswamy, Ramanathan, and Arunachalam, Burhers like Charles Ambrose Lorenz and Richard Morgan, Sinhalese such as James de Alwis and James Pieris, and even Britishers such as William Digby (who in fact once declared himself a Ceylonese) and John Ferguson, all working towards the common goal of the better government of this country-- though with varying individual reservations as to the nature of that better government, and the path to be followed to reach it.

This trend came to a climax during the first quarter of this century when Ramanathan and Arunachlam, each in his turn, in 1915 and 1919 respectively reached the height of uuniversal acceptance as unchallenged leaders of a single Ceylonese nation, Will a Tamil once again be permitted to lead a Ceylonese nation and if so, must he be a Buddhist and speak the Sinhala language? The answer to this question holds the key to the future of this country, whether there will be one Sri Lanka or a Sinhalese Sri Lanka and a Tamil Eelam.



Two great men, whom the writer had the good fortune to know personally, C.E. Corea and E. T. de Silva, strove hard to preserve the harmony between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. But unfortunately when this closely-knit brotherhood in the struggle for swaraj came to divide the spoils, a measly pittance of political reforms offered by Governor Manning, they began to quarrel.

About this time there appeared on the horizon one who seemed to be a man of destiny. The writer, who was one of his earliest colleagues in the Progressive Nationalist Party, remembers vividly the staggering impact made on the political scene by this harbinger of Freedom, S.W.R. Dias Bandaranaike. A scion of the Anglicised elite, he challenged and defeated A. E. Goonesinhe the man of the people at the Municipal Council Election at Maradana in 1926.

Bandaranaike had his own talisman a federal system of government, to solve the Sinhala-Tamil imbroglio. A thousand and one objections, he declared, could be raised against the federal system but when the objections were dissipated he was convinced that some form of federal government was the only solution. Strangely enough this purveyor of a new political panacea later came to abandon his own sure remedy and became the unwitting instrument of Fate for the turmoil we have inherited today. With one blow he divided this fair land of ours into two, by clamouring for Sinhala Only in Twenty Four Hours.

In de Silva's history we find a masterly appraisal, recorded in great detail of the events that occurred during the years that intervened between the historic inauguration of the Ceylon National Congress by Arunachalam in 1919 and the introduction of the Official Language Act by Bandaranaike in 1956. These were the years of D. S. Senanayake, Bandaranaike and G. G. Ponnambalam. The burning question of the day was the Sinhala-Tamil relations and, looking back, one can see that the extremism of Bandaranaike and the fanatical response of Ponnambalam with his Fifty-Fifty slogan, did irreparable damage to the evolution of a truly Ceylonese nation.

One is struck by de Silva's even-handed approach. A Sinhalese or a Tamil may feel ashamed of some of the things that had happened, but de Silva is absolved from partisanship. His assessment of Bandaranaike is fair and just. But he reserves the halo for D. S. Senanayake and he has reasons to show for that.

De Silva is the leading historian of the University of Peradeniya. He is at the head of a galaxy of scholars, reputed for their scholarship, probity and dedication. His special field covers the British and the post-independence period of Sri Lanka's history. His reputation as an undoubted authority has travelled far and wide. In the present ambitious work, which he has accomplished with resounding credit both to himself and the subject, he has consulted almost every authority that mattered. The book is replete with innumerable footnotes and a select biblio-

graphy, going into four pages of small print, gives proof of painstaking and exhaustive research. One distinctive feature of this work is its cohesiveness as being the work of a single author. It is not a collection of articles or quotations, with or without inverted commas. One chapter leads on to the other and the apparent imbalance due to the smaller space given to the pre-British period does not really affect the main lines of development.

A book such as de Ailva's history is a compendious product where the works of a multitude of scholars are consulted and their views analysed, tested, and where necessary, incorporated into the book, with the stamp of the author's own personality and style. It is possible that in a few cases acknowledgement had been forgotten and some passages had inadvertently passed into the currency of de Silva's language and style. This book is bound to go into several editions before long. The author will no doubt take note of the comments and criticisms offered and mention the names of any authors omitted inadvertently in the present volume.

When one has finished reading this book, which is easy reading though the area covered is extensive, one cannot fail to be impressed by its momentous appearance. It is not every man that can write a good history. The omniscient Lord Acton failed to produce one to history's irreparable loss. Even our own Justin La Brooy did not seem to have had that confidence and, we might say, courage which are as necessary as other qualifications he possessed -- a vast knowledge, mastery of details, a neat and precise style and an intelligent capacity to evaluate and select or reject data. In the present book, we find a rare and happy combination of all these ingredients in La Brooy's distinguished pupil Kingsley de Silva, and the book is truly the fulfilment of La Brooy's own dream.

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