

Sri Lanka

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Reclining Buddha, Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.



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INTRODUCTION

Capital	–	Colombo
Area	–	65,610 sq. km
Population	–	20,064,776
Language	–	Sinhala, Tamil and English
Literacy	–	92.3%
Religions	–	Buddhism 70%, Hindu 15%, Christianity 8% and Islam 7%
Currency	–	Rupee (US \$ 1 = 100.50)
Per Capita Income (p.p.p.)		\$4,000
President	–	Mahinda Rajapakse
Prime Minister	–	Ratnasiri Wickrenanayake
National Flag	–	A yellow field bearing 2 pannels. In the hoist 2 vertical stripes of green and orange, in the fly, dark red with a gold lion holding a sword and in each corners a gold 'bo leaf'.
National Anthem	–	'Sri Lanka Matha, Apa Sri Lanka' ("Mother Sri Lanka, thee Sri Lanka")

Sri Lanka is a small tear-drop shaped independent island in the Indian Ocean about 80km. east of the southern tip of India. Sri Lanka is separated from India by the narrow and shallow Palk Strait. "Sri Lanka is located between Latitudes 5.55' and 9.51' North and Longitudes 79.41' and 81.53' East, and has a maximum length of 268 miles (432 kilometers) and has a maximum width of 139 miles (224 kilometers). Proximity to

the Indian subcontinent has facilitated close cultural interaction between Sri Lanka and India from ancient times. At a crossroads of maritime routes traversing the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has also been exposed to cultural influences from other Asian civilizations. Ancient Greek geographers called it Taprobane. Arabs referred to it as Serendib. Later European mapmakers called it Ceylon, a name still used occasionally for trade purposes. It officially became Sri Lanka in 1972. The distinctive civilization of Sri Lanka, with roots that can be traced back to the 6th century BC, is characterized by two factors: the preservation of Theravada Buddhism (the orthodox school of Buddhism having its literary traditions in the Pâli language) and the development over two millennia of a sophisticated system of irrigation in the drier parts of the country. This civilization was further enriched by the influences of Hinduism and Islam. In 1948, after nearly 150 years of British rule, Sri Lanka became an independent country, and it was admitted to the United Nations seven years later. The country is a member of the Commonwealth and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Colombo, which emerged as the main urban centre during British rule, remains the capital of Sri Lanka. For administrative purposes, the country has been divided into nine provinces and subdivided into 25 districts. Sri Lanka is densely populated. The majority of its people are poor, live in rural areas, and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. A physical environment of wide-ranging diversity makes Sri Lanka one of the world's most scenic countries. As the home of several ethnic groups, each with its own cultural heritage, Sri Lanka also has a highly varied cultural landscape.”¹

PHYSICAL AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

A. Relief

“A roughly triangular mountainous area known as the Central Highlands occupies the south-central region of Sri Lanka and is the heart of the country. This highland mass is surrounded by a diverse plain, the general elevation of which ranges from sea level to about 1,000 feet (300 metres). This plain accounts for about five-sixths of the country’s total area. The Central Highlands have a highly dissected terrain consisting of a unique arrangement of plateaus, ridges, escarpments, intermontane basins, and valleys. Sri Lanka’s highest mountains – Pidurutalagala at 8,281 feet, Kirigalpotta (7,858 feet), and Adam’s Peak (Sri Pada; 7,559 feet) – are found in this area. The highlands, except on their western and southwestern flanks, are sharply defined by a series of escarpments, the most spectacular being the so-called World’s End, a near-vertical precipice of about 4,000 feet. The plain that surrounds the Central Highlands does not have an entirely flat and featureless terrain. To the north and northeast of the highlands, the plain is traversed by low ridges that decrease in altitude as they approach the coast. The western and southwestern parts of the plain feature alternating ridges and valleys running parallel to the coast and increasing in elevation toward the interior to merge imperceptibly with the highland mass. Elsewhere the flatness of the plain is sporadically interrupted by rocky buttes and mounds, some of which reach elevations of more than 1,000 feet. The plain is fringed by a coast consisting mostly of sandy beaches, spits, and lagoons. Over a few stretches of the coast there are rocky promontories and cliffs, deep-water bays, and offshore islets. Geologically, the island of Sri Lanka is

considered a southerly extension of peninsular India (the Deccan), with which it shares a continental shelf and some of its basic litho logic and geomorphic characteristics. Hard, crystalline rock formations, such as granite, gneisses, khondalite (a type of metamorphic rock), and quartzite, make up about nine-tenths of the island's surface and subsurface.”²

B. Drainage

“The surface drainage of Sri Lanka is made up of about 100 “rivers,” most of which are mere wet-season rivulets. Twelve major rivers account for about 75 percent of the mean annual river discharge of the country, with those that flow entirely through the Wet Zone (the highlands and the southwestern part of the country) carrying about half the total discharge. With the exception of the 208-mile-long Mahaweli River, all major rivers flow radially from the Central Highlands to the sea. The Mahaweli, which originates on the western slopes of the highest areas of the highlands, follows a circuitous route in its upper reaches before it enters the plain to the east of the highlands and then flows toward the northeast coast. Because a part of its catchment is well within the Wet Zone, this river has a larger and less seasonally varied flow than the other Dry Zone rivers and so is a major asset for irrigation in the drier parts of the country (the Dry Zone includes the northern part of the country and much of the east and southeast).”³

C. Soils

“Variations of soil within Sri Lanka reflect the effects of climate, lithology, and terrain on the soil-forming processes. The climatic influences are reflected in the dominance of red-yellow podzolic soils (leached lateritic soils) in the Wet Zone and of

reddish brown earths (nonlateritic loamy soils) in the Dry Zone. In parts of the Central Highlands there are reddish brown latosolic soils (partially laterized soils) or immature brown loams (clayey loams). Among the other important soil types are the alluvials that occur along the lower courses of rivers and the regosols (sandy soils) of the coastal tracts. Most of the soils of Sri Lanka are potentially suitable for some kind of agricultural use. However, depletion of the natural fertility of the soil has occurred extensively, especially on the rugged terrain of the highlands, owing to poor soil conservation.”⁴

D. Climate

“Sri Lanka’s tropical location ensures perennially high temperatures, with monthly averages between 72° F (22° C) and 92° F (33° C) in the lowlands. In the Central Highlands, higher altitudes account for lower temperatures, with monthly averages between 44° F (7° C) and 71° F (21.6° C).

Rainfall is the conspicuous factor in the seasonal and diurnal variations of the climate of Sri Lanka. Most parts of the country receive an average annual rainfall of more than 50 inches (1,270 millimeters). However, regional differences in the amount of rain, its seasonality, and its variability and effectiveness have formed the basis of a distinction in Sri Lanka between a Wet Zone and a Dry Zone. In the former area, which covers the southwestern quadrant of the island (including the highlands), the rainfall is heavy (annual averages range from 98 inches along the coast to more than 150 inches in the highlands) and seasonally well distributed (although a greater part of the rain comes from the southwest monsoon from May to September). Rainfall deviates relatively little each year from the annual averages and is effective enough to maintain soil moisture and surface drainage

throughout the year. Over the rest of the island – the Dry Zone – annual totals of rain range from 30 to 70 inches in the different areas (much of it being received during the northeast monsoon season from November to January). Droughts that persist for more than three months are common.”⁵

E. Plant and Animal Life

“Sri Lanka’s natural vegetation covers about one third of the total land area.”⁶

“The virgin forests of Sri Lanka are rich in their variety and profusion of flora and fauna. Wildlife, including elephants, leopards, bears, buffalo, and peafowl, and tree species such as ebony, mahogany, satinwood, and teak are being rapidly depleted by indiscriminate exploitation.”⁷

F. Settlement Patterns

“The Colombo Metropolitan Region dominates the settlement system of Sri Lanka. It includes the legislative capital, Kotte. It is also the foremost administrative, commercial, and industrial area and the hub of the transport network of Sri Lanka. Urban settlements outside this area are much smaller and less diversified in functions.”⁸

THE PEOPLE

A. Ethnic Composition

“Ethnic, religious, and linguistic distinctions in Sri Lanka are essentially the same. Three ethnic groups – Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim – make up more than 99 percent of the country’s population, with the Sinhalese alone accounting for nearly three-

fourths of the people. The Tamil segment comprises two groups – Sri Lankan Tamils (long-settled descendants from southeastern India) and Indian Tamils (recent immigrants from southeastern India, most of whom were migrant workers brought to Sri Lanka under British rule). Slightly more than one-eighth of the total population belongs to the former group 5% belongs to Indian Tamils. Muslims, who trace their origin back to Arab traders of the 8th century, account for about 7.5 percent of the population. Burghers (a community of mixed European descent), Parsis (immigrants from western India), and Veddas (regarded as the aboriginal inhabitants of the country) total less than 1 percent of the population.”⁹

B. Language and Religion

“Among the principal ethnic groups, language and religion determine identity. While the mother tongue of the Sinhalese is Sinhala – an Indo-Aryan language – the Tamils speak the Dravidian language of Tamil. Again, while more than 90 percent of the Sinhalese are Buddhists, both Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils are overwhelmingly Hindu. The Muslims – adherents of Islam – usually speak Tamil. Christianity draws its followers (about 7 percent of the population) from among the Sinhales, Tamil, and Burgher communities.”¹⁰

C. Ethnic Relations

“Sri Lanka’s ethnic relations are characterized by periodic disharmony. Since independence, estranged relations between the Sinhalese and the Tamils have continued in the political arena. Intensifying grievances of the latter group against the Sinhalese-dominated governments culminated in the late 1970s in a demand by the Tamil United Liberation Front, the main political

party of that community, for an independent Tamil state comprising the northern and eastern provinces. This demand grew increasingly militant and eventually evolved into a separatist war featured by acts of terrorism. The violence to which the Tamils living in Sinhalese-majority areas were subjected in 1983 contributed to this escalation of the conflict. The secessionist demand itself has met with opposition from the other ethnic groups.”¹¹

D. Demographic Trends

“At independence Sri Lanka had a population of about 6.5 million, which by the early 1990s had increased to more than 17 million. The rate of population growth averaged about 2.6 percent annually up to the early 1970s and declined to about 1.7 percent over the next two decades. In Sri Lanka the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas has remained a slow process. The pronounced trend has been that of migration into the Dry Zone interior, which has doubled its share of the country’s population since independence.”¹²

THE ECONOMY

“The economy that evolved in Sri Lanka under British rule consisted of a modern sector, the main component being plantation agriculture, and a traditional sector comprising subsistence agriculture. Manufacturing was an insignificant segment of the economy. Banking and commerce were, for the most part, ancillary to plantation agriculture. Nearly all foreign earnings were derived from the three staple plantation crops – tea, rubber, and coconut. The country depended on imports for nearly three-fourths of its food requirements and almost all of

its manufactured goods.”¹³

“After the late 1970s there was a shift away from the earlier policies toward ones aimed at liberalizing the economy from excessive government controls. The new policies were designed to accelerate economic growth by stimulating private investment and to increase the country’s foreign earnings by promoting export-oriented economic activities. The liberalization policies succeeded initially. Stimulated by a substantially enhanced level of foreign aid and investment, the economy became buoyant, recording, up to about 1984, real growth rates of about 6 percent per annum. Thereafter, however, there was a marked deceleration of growth, caused mainly by the disruptive effects of the ethnic conflict on economic activity.”¹⁴

A. Resources

“In Sri Lanka the resource potential in minerals such as gemstones, graphite, ilmenite, iron ore, limestone, quartz, mica, industrial clays, and salt is large. Small but commercially extractable amounts of nonferrous metals and minerals like titanium, monazite, and zircon are contained in the beach sands of a few localities. Of fossil fuels, the only known resource is the low-grade peat found in a swampy stretch along the west coast.”¹⁵

B. Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing

“Rice production is the most important economic activity of Sri Lanka’s peasantry. Since independence there has been an impressive increase of paddy production. The factors that contributed to this were, first, the opening of 248,000 acres for paddy in the colonization schemes of the Dry Zone (including those of the Mahaweli Development Program launched in the

early 1970s) and, second, the adoption of yield-increasing technology. Other important changes in peasant agriculture during post independence times included diversification of production as well as increased commercialization of production transactions.”¹⁶

“Plantations represent a segment of the economy that has failed to make significant advances since the time of independence. This is largely attributable to the persistently low rates of investment in this sector. Sri Lanka’s land reforms of 1972–75, through which the government acquired the ownership of about 60 percent of the total tea acreage and 30 percent of the rubber acreage, also contributed to the decline in productivity and commercial viability of the plantation sector.

Forestry and fishing are relatively insignificant components of the economy. Forests had been cleared for settlement and agriculture at an estimated rate of 104,000 acres annually between 1956 and 1981. Extraction of timber and fuel wood from forests is constrained by environmental conservation. In fisheries, the resource potential is abundant, particularly on the north and northwest coasts. Constraints on development are largely technological. Fishing, however, is an important occupation for the people living along the coastal fringe.”¹⁷

C. Industry

“Sri Lanka’s mineral-extraction industries include mining of gemstones and graphite; excavation of beach sands containing ilmenite and monazite; and quarrying kaolin, apatite, quartz sand, clay, and salt. Among them, gem mining is the most important, producing high-value gemstones such as sapphire, ruby, and topaz, in addition to a variety of semiprecious stones, most of which reach foreign markets. Graphite, ilmenite, and

monazite, exported in semi processed form, contribute on a small scale to Sri Lanka's foreign earnings. The other minerals are used locally as raw materials in the manufacturing and construction industries."¹⁸

D. Finance, Trade and Transportation

“Banking and the issue of currency are controlled by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. Until the late 1970s, commercial banking was the near-exclusive monopoly of two state-run banks, the Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank. The post liberalization period allowed the establishment of several private commercial banks and an overall expansion in banking, particularly with the government's decision in 1979 to allow foreign banks to open branches in Sri Lanka. These same trends were replicated in other spheres of commerce such as insurance and wholesale trade in imported goods. The increased participation of the private sector in industry and commerce has led to the emergence of a small but vibrant stock market in Colombo.

Changes in agriculture and industry have brought about a decline in the relative importance of plantation products among the exports and of food commodities among the imports. This, however, has not reduced the adverse balance in foreign trade from which the economy continues to suffer. Most of the trade deficit results from transactions with the industrialized countries of East Asia from which the bulk of imported manufactured goods originate. Usually, small surpluses are generated in the transactions with other major trading partners – France, Germany, the United States, and Saudi Arabia.

Road and rail transport accounts for an overwhelmingly large share of the movement of people and commodities within

Sri Lanka. In rail transport the government holds a monopoly. Passenger transport by road is shared by the government and the private sector. The private automobile remains a luxury that only the affluent can afford. The bicycle and the bullock cart are important modes of conveyance, especially in rural areas.

Air Lanka, the national airline, operates regularly between its base at Colombo and several major cities in Asia and Europe. Other airlines that frequent Colombo include the national carriers of Singapore, Thailand, India, The Netherlands, and Britain. The seaport of Colombo handles the bulk of Sri Lanka's shipping, including some transshipments of the Indian ports. International cargo is also handled by the ports at Trincomalee and Galle."¹⁹

ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL CONDITION

A. Government

"A representative, democratic system of government has existed in Sri Lanka since the termination of British rule in 1948. Elections are regularly held, and citizens over 18 years of age may vote. Fairly contested elections have resulted in several orderly changes of government since independence."²⁰

"The independence of Sri Lanka's judiciary is protected by the constitution. The Supreme Court is the highest appellate court and the final arbiter in constitutional disputes. The Court of Appeal, High Court, district courts, magistrate's courts, and primary courts occupy, successively, the lower levels of the hierarchy. The common law of Sri Lanka is based largely on Roman-Dutch law. Principles drawn from indigenous legal traditions are applied to aspects of civil law concerning certain communities."²¹

B. Education

“The government controls the educational system and offers free education from primary schools through university levels and in certain professional and technical fields. The country has a relatively well-developed system of primary and secondary education with high rates of student enrollment in most parts of the country. More than 85 percent of the population is literate, giving Sri Lanka one of the highest literacy rates among developing countries.”²²

C. Health and Welfare

“In Sri Lanka, government-sponsored health services are free and are delivered through an extensive network of hospitals and dispensaries. Several special campaigns in preventive health care, and a program of family planning – all based on Western medical technology – have significantly improved health conditions in Sri Lanka. These services coexist with a smaller private sector in Western medicine. Several indigenous traditions of curative health care, some of which receive government sponsorship, remain largely in the private sector but play an important role in Sri Lankan medical practices. Practitioners of traditional medicine (*ayurveda*) outnumber Western-trained physicians. Major health problems include malnutrition and various gastrointestinal infectious diseases.”²³

CULTURAL LIFE

“Sri Lanka is a land of great cultural diversity. Religion pervades many aspects of life and constitutes a basic element of this diversity. Buddhist and Hindu temples, as well as mosques and churches, with their own colourful rituals, are the most

readily visible features of the cultural landscape. Varying degrees of colonial impact, modernizing influences, and wealth and income add other shades to the cultural mosaic.”²⁴

A. The Arts

“In architecture, sculpture, and painting, Sri Lanka’s traditions extend far back into antiquity. The remnants of ancient works restored and preserved at archaeological sites, while reflecting Indian influences, also bear testimony to the inspiration derived from Buddhism. Classical literature, too, presents a blend of stylistic influences from India with Buddhist themes.”²⁵

“In the performing arts there are several Sinhalese and Tamil folk traditions and a host of recent imports and imitations.”²⁶

B. Cultural Institutions

“Government assistance to the arts is channeled through several institutions under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Art, music, and dancing are included in the school curriculum. Advanced training in these and several other fields of fine arts is provided at the Government College of Fine Arts, the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, and several private institutions. The Department of National Archives and the National Museum, both in Colombo, are the main repositories of historical documents and archaeological treasures of the country.”²⁷

C. Recreation

“Many internationally recognized sports have found participants in Sri Lanka. The most popular among them are volleyball, cricket, football (soccer), bicycle racing, and various water sports.

The sites of ancient cities and other religiocultural centres

such as Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Kandy, Kataragama, and Adam's Peak attract thousands of tourists and pilgrims."²⁸

D. Press and Broadcasting

“Print and broadcast media reach all parts of the country in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The government controls radio and television broadcasting and several widely circulated daily newspapers. Several private daily and weekly newspapers operate independently of the government and exercise considerable freedom of expression. However, the government is empowered to impose censorship under the Public Security Act.”²⁹

HISTORY

“Sri Lanka has had a continuous record of settled and civilized life for more than two millennia. The content and direction of this civilization has been shaped by that of the Indian subcontinent. The island's two major ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and its two dominant religious cultures, Buddhist and Hindu, made their way onto the island from India. The various expressions of literate culture parallel those of India, and overall the culture and civilization of Sri Lanka are of the Indic pattern.”³⁰

“A common experience of European colonial rule and its modernizing influences brought Sri Lanka closer to India and, with the attainment of independence in the mid-20th century, both countries developed similar social institutions and ideologies.

The historic connection between Sri Lanka and India was the result mainly of geographic proximity. Geologically an extension of peninsular India, Sri Lanka's separation from the Indian

mainland could possibly be as recent as the Miocene Epoch. Historically, the island has also been influenced by its location along the east-west sea route. Even before the discovery of the oceanic route from Europe to India in the 15th century, Sri Lanka was a meeting point for Eastern and Western trade. The island was known to Greek and Roman cartographers and sailors and later to Persian, Armenian, and Arab navigators. With the coming of the Europeans, the strategic importance of Sri Lanka increased, and Western maritime powers fought to control its shores.”³¹

“Sri Lanka possesses a continuous historical tradition preserved in written form by Buddhist chroniclers. The core of this tradition – the chronicle called the Mahavamsa (“Great Chronicle”) and its continuation called the Cûlavamsa (“Little Chronicle”) – constitutes a literary record of the establishment and growth of Sinhalese political power and of the Buddhist faith on the island.”³²

A. Prehistoric Record

“Studies of prehistoric Sri Lanka have not yet achieved a sequence of datable strata. The Stone Age appears to have begun with the Paleolithic, or Old Stone Age (about 1,750,000 years ago), when chert and quartz were abundant because of climatic changes. The earliest Stone Age implements found were made from those materials with a technique similar to that of the Old Stone Age cultures of India, which had identical environmental conditions.

The Mesolithic Period, or Middle Stone Age, has produced more artifacts on the island; microliths have been found almost throughout, especially among the grasslands in the hill country and the sandy tracts of the coast.

The transformation from food gathering to food producing and some form of settled life marks the transition to the Neolithic Period, or New Stone Age (probably more than 5,000 years ago).”³³

B. Colonization and the Spread of Buddhism

Record of earliest Sinhalese tradition in the Mahavamsa, the first Indian colonists on Sri Lanka were prince Vijaya and his 700 followers, who landed on the west coast near Puttalam (5th century B.C). They were banished for misconduct from the kingdom of Sinhapura by Vijaya’s father, king Sinhabahu who drove them away in ship. According to the tradition when Vijaya landed on the island then it was inhabitat by demons, whom they defeated and chased into the interior. Vijaya married a demon princess and had two children by her. Later he drove her and the children away and send to the Madurai court in India for a Pandu princess and for wives for his 700 followers. Vijaya settled down to reign as king after a ceremonial enthronement and married and founded a dynasty. He had no heir to the throne, and toward the end of the reign he sent his younger brother at Sinhapura. The brother was unwilling to leave his native land and sent his youngest son, Panduvasudeva, to Sri Lanka. Panduvasudeva landed with 32 followers at Gokanna (now Trincomalee) on the east coast and was enthroned at Upatissagama and continued the Vijaya dynasty.

(i) Indo – Aryan Settlement

“This traditional account contains an element of historical fact – the settlement of Sri Lanka by Indo-Aryan tribes from North India. Controversy exists as to the provenance of the early colonists; the legends contain evidence for both the northeastern and the northwestern parts of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. Vijaya’s ancestors

hailed from Bengal, but his father established himself subsequently in Gujarat, from where the adventurers were put out to sea.”²³⁴

“The traditional accounts of the arrival of Panduvasudeva may portray a second wave of migration following the first mentioned in the Vijaya legend. Linguistic affinities between the early Sinhala- and Prâkrit-speaking peoples of eastern India strengthen the hypothesis of a migration from this area. The tradition speaks primarily of colonization by conquest, and tribes of conquerors led by warrior nobility would have been an important factor in Aryan settlement. But this would have formed only one element of the Aryan migrations. Indo-Aryan traders probably reached Sri Lanka while sailing down the Indian coast; the natural products of Sri Lanka were lucrative items of trade and may have influenced some of these merchants to found settlements. The view that Indo-Aryan migrants laid the foundations of Sinhalese civilization is now increasingly open to question. Recent archaeological evidence indicates that settled agriculture, tank irrigation, use of iron, and pottery were features present before the Indo-Aryan migrations. During the early phase of these migrations, a synthesis seems to have taken place with pre-Aryan and possibly Dravidian elements to create the early Sinhalese culture of the Anuradhapura period. The traditional account of Vijaya’s confrontation with demon tribes and the search for consorts in the Pandu kingdom of Madurai (if this may be presumed to be the Pandyan Tamil kingdom of southern India) point to such integration.

Indo-Aryan settlements grew in different parts of the island from about the 5th century BC. The settlers came in numerous clans or tribes; the most powerful were the Sinhalese, who eventually gave their name to the descendants of the various

groups. The earliest settlers were those on the west-central coast, who pushed inland along the Malwatu River and founded a number of riverbank villages. Their seat of government was Upatissagama.

Tradition attributes the founding of the kingdom of Anuradhapura to Pânduukkâbhaya, the third king of the Vijaya dynasty. With its growth as the strongest Sinhalese kingdom, the city of Anuradhapura and the nearby settlements flourished. Kings built up the city and developed it for urban life; they extended royal control over villages and outlying settlements. The establishment of strong government led to population growth and to extensive colonization of the north-central region. The political system was Brahmanic, similar to that of Indo-Aryan kingdoms of the Gangetic Plain.”³⁰

(ii) Conversion to Buddhism

“According to Sinhalese tradition, Buddhism was first brought to Sri Lanka by a mission sent out under the patronage of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (c. 269–232 BC) and led by his son, Mahinda. Mahinda and his colleagues arrived at the Mihintale hill, eight miles from the royal capital. There Mahinda chanced to meet the Sinhalese king Tissa and preached the king a sermon on Buddhism. The king was immediately converted and invited the missionaries to the city. The missionaries were settled in a royal pavilion in the city park of Mahâmegha from where they preached, first to members of the royal family and then to the common people. Many embraced the new faith, and some took holy orders and joined the Buddhist sangha (community of monks).”³⁶

“The king donated the Mahâmegha park to the sangha, and the monastery of Mahâvihâra was established and became the prime centre of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Mahinda sent for his sister Sanghamittâ, who arrived with a branch of the bo tree at Gayâ,

sacred to Buddhists as the tree under which Buddha attained Enlightenment. The sapling was ceremonially planted in the city. Sanghamittâ founded an order of nuns. A stupa (shrine), the Thûpârâmacetiya, was built by the king for popular worship. Thus, various institutions of Buddhism were founded in the kingdom, and the faith became its established religion.

Through the conversion of King Tissa and the missionary activity of monks in the villages, by the 2nd century BC the Sinhalese had accepted Buddhism totally, and this faith helped to produce a unity and consciousness on which subsequent political and economic strength was founded.”³⁷

C. The Classical Age (c. 200 BC – AD 1200)

“As Buddhism spread, the Anuradhapura kingdom extended its political control over the rest of Sri Lanka. This age of political centralization began with Duttagâmanî Abhaya (reigned 161–137 BC).”³⁸

(i) The Anuradhapura Period

“The Vijaya dynasty of kings continued, with brief interruptions, until AD 65, when Vasabha founded the Lambakanna dynasty. The Lambakannas ruled for about four centuries; their most noteworthy king was Mahâsena (reigned 276–303), who constructed many major irrigation systems and championed heterodox Buddhist sects.

A Pandyan invasion from southern India put an end to this dynasty and, briefly, to Sinhalese rule in 432. Dhâtusena (reigned 459–477) defeated the Pândyas and reestablished Sinhalese rule with a line of Moriya kings. His son Kâsyapa I (reigned 477–495) moved the capital from Anuradhapura to the rock fortress of Sigiriya. After Kâûyapa’s dethronement the capital was

returned to Anuradhapura.

From the 7th century there was an increase in the involvement of South Indian powers in the island's politics and in the presence of Tamil mercenaries in and around the capital. Mânavamma, a Sinhalese royal fugitive, was placed on the throne in 684 with the support of the Pallavas of South India.

Mânavamma founded the second Lambakanna dynasty, which reigned in Anuradhapura for about 400 years. The dynasty produced a number of distinguished kings who consolidated and extended Sinhalese political power. During this period, Sinhalese involvement with southern India was even closer. Sinhalese kings were drawn into the dynastic battles between the Pandyas, Pallavas, and Colas. Invasions from South India to Sri Lanka and retaliatory raids were a recurrent phenomenon. The 10th century saw a weakening of the island's political and military power owing to regional particularism and internecine warfare, and the Colas – hostile because of the Sinhalese alliance with Pandya – attacked and occupied the kingdom in 993 and annexed Rajarata as a province of the Colas empire. The conquest was completed in 1017 when the Colas seized the southern province of Ruhuna.”³⁹

(ii) The Polonnaruwa Period

“The Colas occupied Sri Lanka until 1070, when Vijayabâhu liberated the island and reestablished Sinhalese power. He shifted the capital to Polonnaruwa, a city that was easier to defend, that controlled the route to Ruhuna, and the easterly location of which provided more time to prepare for South Indian attacks. The capital remained there for 150 years. The most colourful king of the Polonnaruwa period, and indeed of Sinhalese history, was Parâkramabâhu I (reigned 1153–86), under whom the kingdom enjoyed its greatest prosperity. He followed a strong

foreign policy, sending a punitive naval expedition to Burma and an army of invasion to the Pandyan kingdom but achieving no permanent success. After Parâkramabâhu the throne passed to the Kalinga dynasty, and the influence of South India increased. Nissankamalla (reigned *c.* 1186–96), a brother of Parâkramabâhu's Kalinga queen, was the last effective ruler of this period. The last Polonnaruwa king was Mâgha (reigned 1215–36), an adventurer from South India who seized power and ruled with severity and disrespect for traditional authority.”⁴⁰

D. Drift to the South West (1200-1505)

(i) Political Changes

“After the death of Nissankamalla in 1196, the Polonnaruwa kingdom was weakened by a succession of ineffective rulers. Non-Sinhalese factions such as the Kalingas and Pandyas gained power in Sri Lanka as a result of dynastic marriages with South Indian royalty; conflict between these factions was common. South Indian notables occupied positions of influence under Kalinga kings, and their power was buttressed by mercenaries of various races. Mâgha's rule from 1214 to 1255 was a veritable reign of terror, disregarding traditional authority and established religion. Polonnaruwa fell into the hands of non-Sinhalese elements, each vying with the others for power and office.

Central control from Polonnaruwa was weakened. Ruling kings of foreign descent were unable to exercise political control over outlying provinces. Members of the traditional ruling class gravitated to centres of Sinhalese power located away from the reach of Polonnaruwa in strategic terrain relatively inaccessible and defensible from attack; Dakkhinadesa, or Mâyârata as it was now called, was suitable for this. The first place chosen to

reestablish the Sinhalese kingdom was Dambadeniya, about 70 miles southwest of Polonnaruwa; Vijayabâhu III (reigned 1232–36) and his three successors ruled from there. They made occasional successful raids into Rajarata to attack the Kalinga and Tamil rulers but did not attempt to reoccupy Polonnaruwa. Under Parâkramabâhu II (reigned 1236–70) the Dambadeniya kingdom achieved great power; it was able to expel the Kalinga from the island with Pandyan help and to repel an invasion from the Malay Peninsula.

Bhuvanaika Bâhu I (reigned 1272–84) moved the capital northward to Yapahuwa, an isolated rock, which he strengthened with ramparts and trenches. His successors moved the capital southward again to Kurunegala and about 1344 to Gampola toward the Central Highlands. About the same time, the Alagakônâra, a powerful Sinhalese family, attained a strong position at Rayigama, near the west coast; the Muslim traveler Ibn Battûtah, who visited Sri Lanka in 1344, referred to one of the Alagakônâras as a sultan named Alkonar. In 1412 the capital was taken by Parâkramabâhu VI (reigned 1412–67) to Kotte, a few miles from present - day Colombo; for a brief period under this king, the Kotte kingdom expanded and acquired sovereignty over the island.

Generally, the effective control of the Sinhalese kings from 1200 to 1505 did not extend far beyond their capital cities, though they often made extravagant claims. Taking advantage of the collapse of the Polonnaruwa kingdom after Mâgha's fall and of the drift of Sinhalese political authority to the southwest, a South Indian dynasty called the Ârya Chakaravartis seized power in the north. By the beginning of the 14th century it had founded a Tamil kingdom, its capital at Nallur in the Jaffna Peninsula. The kingdom

of Jaffnapatnam soon expanded southward, initiating a tradition of conflict with the Sinhalese, though Rajarata – by then a largely depopulated country – existed as a buffer between them.

A politically divided and weakened island was an enticement to foreign invasions in the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries. The second Pandyan empire was constantly interfering in the affairs of Sri Lanka; its forces often supported rival claimants to power and took back considerable sums in payment and booty, including, on one occasion, the Tooth Relic – a sacred symbol of Sinhalese sovereignty. The Malay ruler Chandrabhânu invaded the island in 1247 and 1258, for reasons not altogether clear. Forces of the Vijayanagar Empire in South India invaded Sri Lanka on a few occasions in the 15th century, and for a brief period the Jaffna kingdom became its tributary.

Cheng Ho, the great admiral of the third King emperor of China, led a series of expeditions into the Indian Ocean. On his first expedition (1405–07) Cheng landed in Sri Lanka but withdrew hastily; he returned in 1411, defeated the ruler Vîra Alakeúvara, and took him and his minister captive to China.”⁴¹

(ii) Economic Changes

“The drift of Sinhalese political power to the southwest had drastic social and economic consequences. Population gradually shifted in the direction to which the capital was shifting; this led to the neglect of the interconnected systems of water storage. The once-flourishing Rajarata became a devastated ruin of depopulated villages, overgrown jungle, and dried-up tank beds, and the centres of Sinhalese population soon became the monsoon-wasted lands of the south, the southwest, and the Central

Highlands. Consequent changes in agricultural techniques, land use, ownership patterns, and ways of life followed swiftly.”⁴²

(iii) Buddhism and Society

“The Buddhist church had been a beneficiary of the hydraulic system of the Dry Zone. Lands, taxes, and water dues were assigned to temples, which also invested in land, had their own tanks excavated, and derived benefits therefrom. Now these sources of revenue had declined. Kings continued their patronage of Buddhism, but their wealth and power had diminished. Nobles and commoners were not rich enough to make substantial benefactions. The great monasteries of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa were disbanded, and new institutions arose in and around the capitals of Dambadeniya, Kurunegala, Gampola, Rayigama, and Kotte, but they were not of the size or stature of their predecessors in the Dry Zone.

The absence of strong political authority also affected the unity and coherence of the Buddhist church. In this period there was a greater incidence of indiscipline and schism than before. Kings were called upon frequently to purge the sangha of undesirable elements, and its “purification” had to be undertaken now and then.

The influence of Hinduism on Buddhist institutions, theology, and ways of life was more marked during this period. The ruling classes mixed extensively with Tamil royal and noble families, and there was an influx of Brahmans from South India to all parts of the country. Deva worship became a marked feature of popular Buddhism. Vedic and post-Vedic gods now assumed importance and were worshiped by kings and commoners in elaborate festivals.

One of the consequences of the drift of the Sinhalese kingdoms to the southwest and the establishment of the Tamil kingdom to the north was the division of the island into two ethno-linguistic areas. Before this division occurred, Tamil settlements were interspersed among the Sinhalese throughout the island. Then the northern and eastern areas became predominantly Tamil; their numbers were strengthened by fresh migrations from South India after the collapse of the Pandyan kingdom in the 14th century.”⁴³

E. The Portuguese in Sri Lanka (1505-1658)

“By 1500 the Portuguese had begun their penetration of the Indian Ocean. In 1505 a Portuguese fleet commanded by Lourenço de Almeida was blown into Colombo by adverse winds. Almeida received a friendly audience from the king of Kotte, Vîra Parâkrama Bâhu, and was favourably impressed with the commercial and strategic value of the island. The Portuguese soon returned and established a regular and formal contact with Kotte. In 1518 they were permitted to build a fort at Colombo and were given trading concessions.

In 1521 three sons of Vijayabâhu, the reigning king of Kotte, put their father to death and partitioned the kingdom among themselves. The oldest of the brothers, Bhuvanaika Bâhu, ruled at Kotte, and the two others set up independent kingdoms at Sîtâwake and Rayigama. Mâyâdunnç, the king of Sîtâwake, was an ambitious and able ruler who sought to expand his frontiers at the expense of his brother at Kotte. Bhuvanaika Bâhu could not resist the temptation of seeking Portuguese assistance. The Portuguese were eager to help the king, and the more he was pressed by Mâyâdunnç, the greater was his reliance on them. Bhuvanaika Bâhu defended his kingdom against Mâyâdunnç, who

in turn allied himself with the Zamorin of Calicut (in India), an inveterate enemy of the Europeans.

Bhuvanaika Bâhu was succeeded by his grandson Prince Dharmapâla, who was even more dependent on Portuguese support. An agreement between Bhuvanaika Bâhu and the king of Portugal in 1543 had guaranteed the protection of the prince on the throne and the defense of the kingdom; in return the Portuguese were to be confirmed in all their privileges and to receive a tribute of cinnamon. The prince was educated by Franciscans; in 1557, when his conversion to Christianity was announced, he became nothing more than a Portuguese protégé. This act undermined the Kotte dynasty in the eyes of the people. Mâyâdunnç's wars of aggression were now transformed into a struggle against Portuguese influence and interests in the island, and he annexed a large part of the Kotte kingdom. After his death, his son Râjasinha continued these wars successfully on land, though, like his father, he had no way of combating Portuguese sea power.

At the death of Râjasinha in 1593, the Sîtâwake kingdom disintegrated for want of a strong successor. The Portuguese captured much of the lands of the Kotte patrimony and emerged as a strong power on the island. In 1580 Dharmapâla had been persuaded to deed his kingdom to the Portuguese, and, when he died in 1597, they took formal possession of it. Meanwhile a Portuguese expedition to Jaffna in 1560 had no lasting success. A second invasion of 1591, undertaken at the instigation of Christian missionaries, succeeded in installing a Portuguese protégé. Continued unrest and succession disputes made the Portuguese undertake a third expedition, and the kingdom of Jaffna was annexed in 1619.

The Portuguese now controlled all of Sri Lanka except the Central Highlands and eastern coast, where an able Sinhalese nobleman, Vimala Dharma Sürya, had established himself and consolidated his authority. The temptation for the Portuguese to establish hegemony over the entire island was strong, and some attempts were made. These led to protracted warfare and to popular hostility against the foreigners. The Portuguese expanded to the lower reaches of the Central Highlands and annexed the east coast ports of Trincomalee and Batticaloa.”⁴⁴

“Sri Lanka was divided into four dissavanes, or provinces, each headed by a dissava. Other territorial subdivisions were retained. Portuguese held the highest offices, though local officials came from the Sinhalese nobility loyal to the Portuguese.

The Sinhalese system of service tenure was retained and used extensively to secure the essential produce of the land such as cinnamon and elephants. The caste system was retained intact, and all obligations that had been due to the sovereign now accrued to the Portuguese state. The payment in land to officials was retained and extended to Portuguese officials as well.

The Portuguese lacked a proper understanding of the traditional Sinhalese social and economic structure, and excessive demands put upon it led to hardships and popular hostility. Cinnamon and elephants became articles of monopoly; they provided good profits, as did the trade in pepper and areca nuts (betel nuts). Portuguese officials compiled a *tombo*, or land register, to provide a detailed statement of landholding, crops grown, tax obligations, and nature of ownership.

The period of Portuguese rule was marked by intense Roman Catholic missionary activity. Franciscans established centres in the country from 1543 onward. Jesuits were active in

the north. Toward the end of the century, Dominicans and Augustinians arrived. With the conversion of Dharmapâla, many members of the Sinhalese nobility followed suit. Dharmapâla endowed missionary orders lavishly, often from the properties of Buddhist and Hindu temples. After the Portuguese secured control of Sri Lanka, they used their extensive powers of patronage and preference in appointments to promote Christianity. Members of the landed aristocracy embraced Christianity and took Portuguese surnames at baptism. Many coastal communities underwent mass conversion, particularly Jaffna, Mannar, and the fishing communities north of Colombo. Catholic churches with schools attached to them served Catholic communities all over the country. The Portuguese language spread extensively, and the upper classes quickly gained proficiency in it.”²⁴⁵

F. The Kandyan Kingdom (1591-1818)

“When Râjasinha I occupied Kandy about 1580, the ruler of that kingdom took refuge with the Portuguese. In 1591 the Portuguese launched an expedition to Kandy to enthrone Dom Philip, an heir of the dispossessed ruler. They were accompanied by an ambitious and distinguished Sinhalese military nobleman, Konnappu Bandâra. Dom Philip was installed as king but died under suspicious circumstances, and Konnappu Bandâra enthroned himself, proclaiming independence from the Portuguese and taking the regnal name of Vimala Dharma Sûrya. The demise of Sîtâwake after Râjasinha’s death left Kandy the only independent Sinhalese kingdom.

The Portuguese launched another expedition to Kandy in 1594 under General Pedro Lopes de Sousa, planning to enthrone Dona Catherina, a baptized Sinhalese noblewoman. Popular

hostility soon built up toward the continued presence of Portuguese troops. Vimala Dharma Sürya utilized this to his advantage and, making use of guerrilla warfare tactics, routed the Portuguese army in 1594. He captured Dona Catherina, made her his queen, and legitimized and consolidated his rule. He expanded into the old Sîtâwake kingdom and emerged as the leader of resistance to the Portuguese. Subsequently, the Portuguese made a few unsuccessful attempts to subjugate Kandy.

Vimala Dharma realized that without sea power he could not drive the Portuguese out of Sri Lanka. He saw the arrival of the Dutch as an excellent opportunity to gain naval support against his adversaries. The first Dutch envoy, Joris van Spilbergen, met the king in July 1602 and made lavish promises of military assistance. A few months later another Dutch official, Sebald de Weert, arrived with a concrete offer of help and, in view of favourable terms offered by the king, decided to launch a joint attack on the Portuguese. But a misunderstanding between the king and de Weert caused an altercation between the Kandyans and the Dutch, and de Weert and his men were killed.

King Senarat succeeded to the Kandyan throne in 1604 and continued to solicit Dutch support. In 1612 a Dutch envoy, Marcelis Boschouwer, concluded a treaty with Senarat. The king granted the Dutch extensive commercial concessions and a harbour for settlement on the east coast in return for a promise of armed assistance against Portuguese attack. The Dutch were unable to offer adequate assistance, and Senarat turned to the Danes. But, by the time a Danish expedition arrived in May 1620, Senarat had concluded a peace agreement with the Portuguese. The truce was short-lived, and in 1630 the Kandyans, taking the offensive, invaded Portuguese territory and laid siege

to Colombo and Galle. Again the absence of sea power proved a handicap, and another peace was concluded in 1634.

In 1635 Senarat was succeeded by his son Râjasinha II. The Dutch were now firmly established in Batavia in Java and were developing their trade in southern Asia. The king sent emissaries to meet the admiral of the Dutch fleet, Adam Westerwolt, who was then blockading Goa. The fleet came to Sri Lanka and captured Batticaloa. Westerwolt and Râjasinha concluded a treaty on May 23, 1638, giving the Dutch a monopoly on most of Sri Lanka's cinnamon and a repayment in merchandise for expenses incurred in assisting the king. In May 1639 the Dutch fleet captured Trincomalee, and in February 1640 the Dutch and Kandyans combined to take Negombo. But differences arose over the occupation of captured forts. The Dutch refused to give Trincomalee and Batticaloa to the king until their expenses were paid in full, and Râjasinha realized that the Dutch really wanted to replace the Portuguese as the rulers of the coast.

He nevertheless continued to work with them to expel the Portuguese. In March 1640 Galle was taken, but the progress of the allies was temporarily halted by a truce declared in Europe between the United Provinces and Spain, which at that time ruled Portugal and its overseas possessions. In 1645 the boundaries between Portuguese and Dutch territory in Sri Lanka were demarcated. Jan Thijssen was appointed the first Dutch governor.

The Dutch peace with the Portuguese and occupation of captured territory incensed the king and strained relations between him and the Dutch. In May 1645 war broke out between them. Though Râjasinha could not conquer the

occupied lands, he made them worthless to the Dutch by destroying crops and depopulating villages. The Dutch then realized the advantage of coming to terms with the king. In 1649 a revised treaty was signed. The Dutch agreed to hand over some of the lands but again delayed because of the immense debt the king was held to owe them.

The truce with the Portuguese expired in 1652, leaving the Dutch free to resume the war. Kandyans launched attacks on Portuguese positions in the interior provinces of Seven Korales, Four Korales, and Sabaragamuwa, pushing them back to their coastal strongholds, despite fierce Portuguese resistance. Râjasinha was anxious to attack Colombo, but he was put off by the Dutch. He tried to secure guarantees from them for the return of this city after its conquest, and the Dutch made lavish promises. In August 1655 the Dutch were strengthened by the arrival of a large fleet under General Gerard Hulft, and they laid siege to Colombo by sea and by land. In May 1656 the Portuguese surrendered the city to the Dutch, who shut the Kandyans out of its gates. Requests for the cession of Colombo met with evasive replies. Highly incensed, Râjasinha destroyed the lands around Colombo, removed its inhabitants, and withdrew to his mountain kingdom.

After a brief respite the Dutch resumed the expulsion of the Portuguese from Sri Lanka. Admiral Ryckloff van Goens arrived with a fleet to continue the attack on Portuguese strongholds in northern Sri Lanka. The Dutch took Mannar in February 1658 and Jaffna in June. They had replaced the Portuguese as masters of coastal Sri Lanka. Dutch ruled about 150 years in Sri Lanka.”⁴⁶

On other side wars of French Revolution were going on. When Netherlands came under French control, the British began

to move into Sri Lanka from India. In Kandy first the British established contact with the king of Kandy and contracted to replace the Dutch as protectors of the kingdom. As they began to organize the administration, the British realized that the continuing independence of Kandy posed problems: the frontier with Kandy had to be guarded at much expense: trade with the highlands was hampered by customs posts and political insecurity; and land communications between west and east would be quicker if roads could be built through the centre. The advantages of political unification were obvious, but the Kandyan remained deeply suspicious of all foreigners.

Dissensions within the kingdom gave the British an opportunity to interfere in Kandyan affairs. They failed to take over the kingdom in 1803 but succeeded in 1815 with the help of Kandyan chiefs whose relations with the king had deteriorated when the kingdom had reached an advanced stage of disintegration. The British guaranteed Kandyan their privileges and rights and the preservation of customary laws, institutions and relation. Though Kandy was administered separately. The trend towards reducing the status of its chiefs and of the Buddhists faith was unmistakable; this led to a popular rebellion against British control in 1818. After it was suppressed, the Kandyan province was integrated with the rest of the country.

G. Dutch rule in Sri Lanka (1658-1796)

“Though the Dutch East India Company first controlled only the coastal lands, the Dutch gradually pushed inland, occupying considerable territory in southern, southwestern, and western Sri Lanka. In 1665 they expanded to the east coast and thus controlled most of the cinnamon-growing lands and the points of exit and entry on the island.”²⁴⁷

(i) Government

“The governor, residing in Colombo, was the chief executive; he was assisted by a council of the highest officials. The country was divided into three administrative divisions: Colombo, Galle, and Jaffna. Colombo was ruled by the governor, Galle and Jaffna by commanders. The three divisions were subdivided into dissavanies and districts (korales) in the traditional manner. Each dissavani was ruled by a dissava, invariably a Dutch officer; subordinate offices were held by Sinhalese or Tamils loyal to the Dutch.”⁴⁸

(ii) Economy

“Cinnamon, the most lucrative product derived by the Dutch from Sri Lanka, was collected at little or no cost and fetched high prices in European and Asian markets.

The Dutch continued the Portuguese policy of respecting the traditional land structure and service relationship but used it more methodically to enhance revenue. Taxes in kind collected for the state were used in trade. Remuneration of Sinhalese officials in land and obligatory services to the state were continued. The Sinhalese nobility also was retained because the Dutch depended on the rural nobility for knowledge of the system.

The Dutch tried to promote trade with neighbouring countries but under a strictly controlled system. They sought monopolies in the export of cinnamon, elephants, pearls, areca nuts, and other products. This tended to stifle commerce, and thus trade with India declined, leading to a shortage of such essential commodities as rice and textiles. In the early 18th century some relaxation occurred, and private traders from India were admitted into the island’s trade. But the Dutch control of

trade commodities and prices was sought through a system of passes and inspection, and major articles such as cinnamon, elephants, and pearls remained a strict monopoly.”⁴⁹

(iii) Laws

“The Dutch judicial system was well organized. There were three major courts of justice – in Colombo, Galle, and Jaffna; appeals from these courts were heard by the Colombo court. A circuit court, the Land Raad, was presided over by the dissava and sat in various districts. Native chiefs were invited to sit on cases involving local custom. The customary law of the land was administered in the courts, unless it clashed violently with Dutch jurisprudence.

Increasingly in the 18th century, Roman-Dutch law was used in the Sinhalese areas of the southwest and south. This had important social consequences. Private property rights in land spread more widely in these areas, and property transfers were subject to Roman-Dutch law. A gradual transformation toward monogamy occurred under the influence of the new legal system.

Some attempt was made to codify customary law. The Thesawalamai, or laws and customs of the Tamils of Jaffna, was codified in 1707. A code of Muslim law was applied with the approval of Muslim headmen. Because of the difficulty in codifying Sinhalese law and custom in view of its regional diversity and complexity, Roman-Dutch law was increasingly applied to the Sinhalese of the cities and the seacoast, especially to those who professed Christianity.”⁵⁰

(iv) Religion

“The Netherlands state was ardently Calvinist, and in the

early years of Dutch rule an enthusiastic effort was made to spread the Reformed faith in Sri Lanka. Roman Catholicism was declared illegal, and its priests were banned from the country; Catholic churches were given to the Reformed faith, with Calvinist pastors appointed to them. Many Sinhalese and Tamil Catholics nominally embraced Protestantism. But the knowledge of the religion was rudimentary because there were not enough ministers, and very few of them could speak either indigenous language fluently.”⁵¹

H. British in Ceylon (1796-1900)

The British East India Company’s conquest of Sri Lanka, which it called Ceylon, occurred during the wars of the French Revolution. When the Netherlands came under French control, the British began to move into Sri Lanka from India. The Dutch, after a halfhearted resistance, surrendered the island in 1796. The British had thought the conquest temporary and administered the island from Madras, but the war with France revealed Sri Lanka’s strategic value and persuaded the British to make their hold on the island permanent. In 1802 Ceylon was made a crown colony, and, by the Treaty of Amiens with France, British possession of maritime Ceylon was confirmed. After that the British controlled Kandy in 1818.

Though reluctant to upset traditional Sinhalese institutions, the British quickly began a reform process. They abolished slavery, relieved native officials of judicial authority, paid salaries in cash, and relaxed the system of compulsory service tenure. Agriculture was encouraged, and production of cinnamon, pepper, sugarcane, cotton, and coffee flourished. Internal communications were extended. Restrictions on European ownership of land were lifted. Christian missionary enterprise was intensive.

The early changes under British rule were systematized by a series of reforms enacted in 1833, which laid the foundation for the subsequent political and economic structure of Ceylon. The British adopted a unitary administrative and judicial system for the whole island. They reduced the autocratic powers of the governor and set up Executive and Legislative councils to share in the task of government; unofficial members (not officials of the government) were gradually appointed to the Legislative Council. English became the language of government and the medium of instruction in schools.

The British eliminated restrictions on the economy. They abolished all state monopolies, did away with compulsory labour service, and promoted the liberation of the economy leading to new economic enterprises. Crown land was sold cheaply to cultivators to encourage plantation agriculture, and capital flowed in.

I. Constitutionalism and Nationalism (1900-1948)

“In the 19th century Ceylonese nationalist consciousness permeated the social, religious, and educational fronts. Revivalist movements in Buddhism and Hinduism sought to modernize their institutions and to defend themselves against Christian inroads by establishing schools to impart Western education unmixed with Christianity.”⁵²

(i) Constitutional Reforms

“Gradually, this consciousness spread to the political arena. Regional and communal associations were founded in the educationally advanced parts of the country and began to voice proposals for reform. They asked for Ceylonese participation in the executive branch, a wider territorial representation in the

legislature, and the adoption of the elective principle in place of nomination. These demands showed a common ideology and approach and revealed a desire to advance within the framework of the colonial constitution.

Because demands were not coordinated or vociferous, the imperial government ignored them. Constitutional reforms passed in 1910 retained the old structure with an appointed executive and a legislature with an appointed majority. There was, however, a limited recognition of the elective principle; an “educated Ceylonese” electorate was established to elect one member to the Legislative Council. Other Ceylonese members were to be nominated on a communal basis.”⁵³

(ii) Growth of Nationalist Power

“During World War I the forces of nationalism in Ceylon gathered momentum. Civil disturbances in 1915 and subsequent political repercussions helped the growth of national political consciousness. British arrests of prominent Sinhalese leaders during what was at first a minor communal riot provoked widespread opposition. Leaders of all communities, feeling the need for a common platform to voice a nationalistic viewpoint, came together for the first political agitation on the island. In 1919 the Ceylon National Congress was formed, uniting Sinhalese and Tamil organizations. The Congress drafted proposals for constitutional reforms, demanding an elected majority in the legislature, control of the budget, and partial control of the executive branch.

A new constitution was promulgated in 1920 under the governor Sir William Manning and then modified in 1924 to satisfy nationalist demands. It provided for an elected majority in the legislature, an increase in the number of territorially elected

members, and the election of communal representatives. The country thus attained representative government, but no share was given in the executive, which remained under the governor and the official Executive Council. A finance committee of the legislature was formed, consisting of three unofficial and three official members, which could examine the budget.

The concession of greater power to the nationalists produced the first fissures among them. Sinhalese leaders wanted to do away with communal representation and make territorial representation universal, but minorities desired to retain it to secure power for their communities. Minorities broke away from the Congress to form their own organizations.

A new constitution, framed in 1931 on the recommendations of a commission appointed to examine constitutional reform, gave Ceylonese leaders opportunities to exercise political power and to gain governmental experience with a view toward eventual self-government. It provided for a State Council with both legislative and executive functions. Besides being a legislative council with an overwhelming majority of territorially elected members, the State Council was divided for executive work into seven committees, each electing its own chairman. These chairmen, or ministers, formed a board of ministers to coordinate their activities and to present an annual budget. The constitution granted universal franchise, thus for the first time bringing all Ceylonese into the political process. It was in operation for more than 15 years and provided the people and their leaders with valuable experience in democracy.”⁵⁴

(iii) Dominion Status

“In response to Ceylonese nationalist leaders – who exerted pressure behind the scenes while cooperating with the war effort

– the British in 1945 appointed the Soul bury Constitutional Commission, which drafted a constitution that gave Ceylon internal self-government, retaining some imperial safeguards in defense and external affairs. In 1947 the Ceylon Independence Act conferred dominion status on the colony; actual independence came on Feb. 4, 1948.’’⁵⁵

SRI LANKA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

A. Sri Lanka up to 2000

“The constitution of independent Ceylon provided for a bicameral legislature with a popularly elected House of Representatives and a Senate that was partly nominated and partly elected indirectly by members of the House. A prime minister and his cabinet, chosen from the largest political group in the legislature, held collective responsibility for executive functions. The governor-general, as head of state, represented the British monarch. In matters that the constitution failed to address, the conventions of the United Kingdom were observed.

When the first elections were held in 1947, a number of nationalist and communal parties came together to form the United National Party (UNP); it chose Don Stephen Senanayake as prime minister and advocated orderly and conservative progress. The UNP was dominated by the English-educated leaders of the colonial era, who were familiar with the British type of parliamentary democracy that had been established on the island, and it included people from all the ethno linguistic groups of Ceylon. Its members were bound by the common ideals of Ceylonese nationalism, parliamentary democracy, and gradual economic progress through free enterprise.

Economically, the island's three export products were doing well in world markets and provided 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. There was a sizeable sterling balance earned during the war. Politically, the coalition government had a substantial majority in Parliament and attracted support as it governed. There were, however, some basic weaknesses in the structure. The political consensus that the government represented embraced the upper 7 percent of the population – the English-educated, Westernized elite groups that shared in the values on which the structure was founded. To the great mass of Sinhala- and Tamil-educated or illiterate people, these values appeared irrelevant and incomprehensible. The continued neglect of traditional culture as embodied in religion, language, and art forms created a gulf that divided the ruling elite from the ruled. Inevitably, leaders and movements arose that articulated the voices of traditionalism and revivalism.

Meanwhile, the country began to face economic difficulties. A rapidly increasing population and free import of consumer goods swiftly ate into the country's foreign exchange. The falling price of Ceylon's rubber and tea and the increase in the price of imported food added to the acute foreign exchange problem. Additionally, the expanded school system produced a large number of educated persons who could not find employment.

These various factors of political and economic discontent converged after 1955, and a new Sinhalese nationalism was unleashed. It found a champion in S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. In the 1956 elections the UNP was defeated, and Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) came to power. The new government immediately set about changing the political structure. It made Sinhala the sole official language (formally in force in 1963) and took measures for state support of the

Buddhist faith and of Sinhalese culture. It wedded the new nationalism to a form of socialism, in which the state was given a powerful role in economic development and creation of economic equality.

The period of Sinhalese nationalism was also a time of political instability. The language policy alienated the Tamils, who, under the Federal Party, carried on a bitter opposition. Educational policies alienated the small but influential Christian community. Cultural and Buddhist reforms alienated different factions within the Sinhalese.

Bandaranaike was assassinated in September 1959, and the movement suffered a setback and languished for want of a leader. After a period of political instability, his widow, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was persuaded to gather together the fragments of the SLFP. In 1960 she formed a government that continued to implement the policies of Sinhalese nationalism. All private schools were nationalized, and state-subsidized private schools were abolished, in response to a demand the Buddhists had made consistently because of the dominance of Christian missions in the country's educational system. The policy of nationalization of economic enterprise was carried further.

By 1965 the tide of Sinhalese nationalism had begun to recede. Language and religion had become less important as political issues. An economic crisis, caused by increasing unemployment, the rising cost of living, an acute shortage of consumer goods, and the failure of state enterprise in industry and trade, made people look back to the UNP. This party gained the support of minorities, and in 1965 it returned to power under Dudley Shelton Senanayake, who, as the son of Don Stephen Senanayake, had served as prime minister (1952–53) after his father's death and briefly in 1960. Senanayake's

government enjoyed a five-year term of office, during which it encouraged private enterprise and made an effort to extend agricultural productivity. These measures, while having moderate success, also tended to create inflation and to increase social inequality. The SLFP formed an alliance with Marxist parties and waged a campaign against the government that called for increased state control of the economy. In 1970 this coalition won a landslide victory, and Bandaranaike again became prime minister.

During its period of office (1970–77), the andaranaike government enacted reforms that restricted private enterprise and extended nationalization to a number of private industries, a large part of the wholesale and distributive trade, agency houses, and foreign-owned plantations. Measures aimed at reducing social inequality were enacted, and an ambitious program of land reform was put into effect. These reforms satisfied the vast majority of underprivileged but did nothing to address basic economic problems such as the mounting trade deficit. The Tamil-and Sinhala-educated youth, impatient for radical change, were disillusioned within a year. Their discontent was headed by the People's Liberation Front (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna; JVP), a group of revolutionary youth who launched an unsuccessful armed rebellion in 1971.

In a new constitution proclaimed in 1972, Ceylon became the Republic of Sri Lanka, with a president as head of state. Effective executive power, however, remained with the prime minister and cabinet, and all existing restraints on the lawmaking powers of the new unicameral legislature were removed. Buddhism was given “the foremost place,” and Sinhala was recognized as the official language.

Sri Lanka's economic decline continued, and the immense economic power held by the state provided the party in power with the opportunity for patronage, nepotism, and corruption. By 1977 unemployment had risen to about 15 percent. The SLFP in July 1977 was defeated by a reorganized UNP under the leadership of J.R. Jayawardene, who became prime minister.

The Jayawardene government arrested the drift toward state control of the economy, trying to revitalize the private sector and attract foreign capital. It set about writing a new constitution, promulgated in 1978, which renamed the country the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and introduced a system based somewhat on the French model. The president remained head of state but was given new executive power as head of government. Although Sinhala and Tamil were recognized as the national languages, Sinhala was to be the official language. In 1978 Jayawardene was elected the first president under the new constitution, and Ranasinghe Premadasa, also of the UNP, became prime minister.²⁵⁶

By the 1980s, there arose a tension between the Ceylon Tamil minority and the Sinhalese Buddhist, majority. In the 1980, as groups representing the Tamil minority moved towards organize insurgency. Tamil bases were built up in jungle areas of the northern and eastern parts of the island and increasingly in the southern districts of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where Tamil groups received official and unofficial support. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was the strongest of these, but there were other competing groups, which were sometimes hostile to each other. Later that year the Tamil militants undertook a guerrilla war against the central government in hopes of creating a separate Tamil state for themselves in the north and north east.

“The Sri Lankan government responded to the unrest by deploying forces to the north and the east, but the eruption of insurgency inflamed communal passions, and in July 1983 there were extensive organized anti-Tamil riots in Colombo and elsewhere. Sinhalese mobs systematically attacked Tamils and destroyed Tamil property, and the riots forced refugees to move within the island and from Sri Lanka to Tamil Nadu.

The Jayawardene government, facing a simultaneous resurgence of Sinhalese militancy of the JVP, became receptive to initiatives by the Indian government. After prolonged negotiations, an accord was signed between India and Sri Lanka on July 29, 1987, that offered the Tamils an autonomous integrated province in the northwest within a united Sri Lanka and provided for an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) to enter the region and enforce the terms. However, the Sri Lankan government, the LTTE, and the IPKF disagreed over implementation of the accord, and the LTTE resumed its offensive, this time against the IPKF, which was trying to disarm it.

In January 1989 Jayawardene retired and was succeeded by Premadasa, who had defeated Bandaranaike in the December 1988 elections. Premadasa negotiated a withdrawal of the IPKF, which was completed in March 1990, and the battle against Tamil insurgency was taken up by the Sri Lankan army. On May 1, 1993, Premadasa was assassinated by a suicide bomber, who allegedly was linked to the LTTE. The premier, Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, was appointed acting president. Ranil Wickremasinghe was appointed Prime Minister.”²⁵⁷

Parliamentary elections were held on 19 August 1994, and Chandrika Kumaratunga formed the government. After the Presidential elections of 9 November, Chandrika Kumaratunga

became President. Under the new government, her mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike was made Prime Minister. War between Northern Tamil separatists and government forces continued, in spite of a ceasefire of January 3, 1995.

“Peace might have come in March 1995, after President Kumartunga Presented a proposal to divide Sri Lanka into several regions, granting Tamils virtual autonomy in the north. Moderate Tamil expressed interest, but the Tigers balked, Charged that the government was merely trying to drive a wedge between them and other Tamils. When the Tigers shattered a 14-week-cease-fire in response, the government launched its campaign against Jaffna, which the Tigers had operated as a virtual mini-state since 1987, with their own police, banks, and civil servants.

Jaffna fell to the army in December 1995, but the Tigers kept up their campaign of terror through the summer. In July 1996 perhaps 4,000 Tigers massed for an attack on Mullaittivu army camp on the east coast, in one of the biggest battles of the war. More than 700 soldiers and rebels died.”⁵⁸

In January 1998, the government outlawed LTTE. Jaffna Mayer Mrs. Sorojini Yogeswaram was assassinated by LTTE in May. In August, the public emergency was extended to all over Sri Lanka. In December 1999, Chandrika Kumaratunga survived a suicide bomb attack by LTTE. Mrs. Sorojini Bandaranaike died on October 10, 2000.

B. Sri Lanka since 2000

2000 – March 2000 saw heavy fighting near Elephant Pass in Jaffna Peninsula. In May, Sri Lanka resumed diplomatic ties with Israel. In June a government minister was blown up by a suicide bomber. The bill on the proposed new constitution was taken up by parliament in August 2000, but government

put off the vote on it-an admission of its failure to muster the necessary two-third parliamentary support. On August 10, Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, 84, resigned and Ratnasiri Wichramanayake took over. Sri Lanka went to the polls in October 2000.

2001 – The 13th census of Sri Lanka was held in July 2001. Tamil Tigers rebels attacked the country's main air base in Colombo and the already – and only – international airport on July 24, the already fragile economy has been crippled. The national airline, Sri Lanka, lost six of its 12 aircraft in the attack, and several foreign carriers have pulled out after insurance premiums were increased, almost doubling the cost of flying to Colombo. This in turn hit the struggling tourist industry, threatening some 48,000 jobs. Meanwhile, maritime insurers slapped a 'war risk' rating on the Colombo port, increasing the cost of bringing a vessel into the country by 35%. The airport attack came in the midst of a political crisis. The president suspended Parliament in June when it appeared her People's Alliance government was going to lose a vote of confidence. Government rejected LTTE demand to lift the ban on it before talks. Government said in August 2001, that it was proposed to call a ceasefire before talks with LTTE. LTTE rejected the offer. Ten keen party workers were the victims of violence in the December 2001, general elections in Sri Lanka. By the end of November some 1,300 incidents involving violence have been reported to the police since parliament was dissolved on October 11th 2001. They included an attempt by a suicide bomber to kill the Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake. He escaped, but five people were killed. The elections were called when it became clear that the People's Alliance was in danger of losing its majority in parliament. Stories were circulating of corruption

among its rank. Neither it nor the President has been able to honour their promise of ending the civil war. But the United National Front of Ratnasiri Wickramanayke did not inspire that much confidence. It was a loose alliance of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim parties, forged with the sole aim of ousting the government.

2002 – On February 2002 ceasefire held between government and Tamil Tigers. Leader of Tamil Tigers Velupillai Prabhakaran held his first international press conference in Killinochchi (in the northern province of Sri Lanka) on April 20, 2002. he demanded recognition of Tamil of Sri Lanka as a distinct nationality. Prabhakaran is the first accused in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (1991). On September 4th, the Sri Lankan government had peace talks in Thailand on September 16th, 2002.

2003 – Sri Lanka government ruled out the possibility of two separate states in January 2003. The Sri Lanka government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam prepare to hold their fifth round of peace talks in Berlin on February 7th and 8th, their ceasefire had survived a year. It was not peace, but it was much better than war, and the longer it lasts more appealing does the prospect of renewed fighting seem. But it cannot be ruled out. Many Sinhalese, who make up three quarters of Sri Lanka's people, believe the Tigers are only pretending to have shaken their brutal methods and separatist ambitions, while they consolidate their control over swathes of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. Reports by Norwegian-led monitors that they have continued to "recruit" hundreds of children added weight to this claim. A spokesman for Sri Lanka's erratic president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, claimed that the Tigers had added 10,000 fighters and civilians to their ranks during the ceasefire.

Her skepticism mattered, since she had the power to dismiss parliament. In April 2003, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who had been waging a 20-year war for an independent Tamil homeland in the north and the east of the island, withdraw from talks with the government. Since then, a ceasefire agreed on a year earlier has held, despite violations. Norwegian diplomats, who helped arrange it, have expressed feared that the antagonists “incredible complacency” masked a “melting at the edges” of the frozen war. But neither side seemed or want to plunge into renewed conflict. The Liberation the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had made public their proposals for an interim settlement of their 20-year struggle for a homeland for Tamils, independent of the Sinhalese majority. But then, on November 4th, Sri Lanka’s president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, mounted a constitutional coup against the government of the Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe. The apparent pretext was the government’s handling of peace talks. So, although she insisted there would be no return to a war that has taken 65,000 lives, she rattled nerves at home and abroad. On November 5th, she declared a state of emergency. Her spokesman maintained that this was merely a legal requirement dictated by the deployment of the army. The stock market fell 13% in a day. Her critics, however, assumed it was an ore-emptive strike against possible pro-government demonstrations. The proposals from the Tigers that supposedly triggered all this were indeed extreme. They demanded an interim authority with a guaranteed Tiger majority, and would make the north and east of the island an independent country in all but name. it would run its own defense, police and tax authorities. It would control the region’s share of the \$ 1 billion a year in foreign aid promised if peace takes hold. It would control two-third of Sri Lanka’s coastline, and the adjacent

maritime resources. And it would appoint to hold an election to establish a permanent government after five years as well. Mrs. Kumaratunga had long complained that the government was giving too much away in the peace talks. Many fear that the Tigers, with their appalling history of terrorist atrocities, have neither dropped their dream of full independence, nor mended their brutal authoritarian ways. Despite a 20-month ceasefire, they have continued to recruit more soldiers – including children – and to assassinate “informers” and political opponents. November 12th, when the government was to table its budget, provided another deadline. The budget was expected to include vote-catching measures aimed at provincial elections in 2004. And it was decided that in the next presidential poll, in 2005, Mrs. Kumaratunga will be constitutionally barred from running. Mr. Wickremesinghe faces no turns into a torrent, his popularity will rise. A meeting between the president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe on November 12th ended with temperas bit cooler, but no meeting of minds. The president said she wanted to discuss power-sharing. This was at least progress since the previous week, when in a constitutional coup she had grabbed a slice more power without discussion, sacking three of the Mr. Wickremesinghe’s ministers and imposing a two-day state of emergency. But Mr. Wickremesinghe wanted to talk about peace negotiated with the Liberation Tigers, who have been observing a 21-month ceasefire in the north and east of the island. The security issues and made it impossible for him to pursue negotiations. Still, the prime minister was in a position of strength. Mrs. Kumaratunga’s party had failed to win over his parliamentary supporters. In Washington at the time of the coup, he returned bearing an international stamp of approval. The

president appeared a self-seeking trouble maker.

2004 – In March 2004, when a Tiger commander in the east known as Colonel Karuna rebelled against the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran, some 150 of his supporters have been murdered, presumably by mainstream Tigers. On October 11th, two more shot dead in their beds in Nagastanna, in east. LTTE removed rebel commander V. Muralitharan. ‘Col-Karuna’ (rebel LTTE commander) rejected amnesty offer. In the parliament election held in April 2004, Chandrika Kumaratunga resigned from leadership of the coalition. On December 26, 2004, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake caused a tsunami in the Indian Ocean that devastated 12 Asian countries. About 30,000 people were killed in Sri Lanka.

2005 – President Kumaratunga and the Tamil Tigers reached a deal in June 2005 to share about \$4.5 billion in international aid to rebuild the country after the devastating tsunami. On August 12th 2005, Sri Lanka’s foreign minister Lakshman Kadigamar was assassinated and both sides were blamed for it. On 10th August, Anton Balasingham, the Tiger’s chief negotiator, had given warning of the potential for an explosion of “full-fledged armed confrontation”. He was expressing exasperation at the Sri Lankan army’s alleged support for a “dirty war of attrition”. Presidential elections were held on August 22nd 2005. After elections Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse become president of Sri Lanka and Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, become prime minister.

2006 – On January 7th 2006, a vessel laden with explosion detached itself from a flotilla of fishing boats off Trincomalee in north-eastern Sri Lanka. Its suicide crew steered it into a Sri Lankan navy fast-petrol craft. Two sailors saw it coming, jumped and were later fished from the sea. Thirteen of their shipmates

died, bringing to more than 50 the number of military personnel killed since the beginning of December. They, on January 12 2006 at least 9 sailors died when a bus they were traveling on was blown up by a mine. On April 25th 2006 a Tamil tiger suicide bomber blew herself up at the army's heavily-fortified headquarters in Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo, seriously wounding the country's hawkish army chief, Sarath Fonseka, and killing a number of his bodyguards. By the evening of April 25th 2006, air force planes, supported by naval artillery, were pulverising rebel positions near the north-eastern port of Trincomalee, sending thousands of local people fleeing into the jungle for refuge. Tamil Tigers rebels detonated a bomb in a busy street in northeastern Sri Lanka on May 1, 2006, killing four members of a family and a navy officer, and adding to fears that the country could fall back into civil war. The rebels also attacked an navy ship nearby, wounding at least five sailors, and gunned down two members of the country's majority ethnic Sinhalese community.

“On May 11, 2006 squadron of LTTE speedboats piloted by Suicide bombers rammed into a Sri Lanka navy troop carrier carrying the chief of the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission {SLMM}, Norway's Major General Ulf Henricsson off the northern coast of Sri Lanka. Seven Sri Lankan navy personnel were killed in the attack. This attack followed a suicide bomb attack in Colombo barely on 25th April 2006, in which the Sri Lankan Army Chief Lt General Sarath Fonseka was nearly killed. The SLMM demanded that the LTTE should immediately cease all operations at sea, as these constituted violations of the ceasefire. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan backed this demand. The LTTE, however, brazenly claimed that as the Cease Fire Agreement was based on its “parity” with the Sri Lankan

Government, it had “sovereignty” over the land, sea and air of the “Tamil Homel and “ in north – eastern Sri Lanka.”⁵⁹

“On May 18, 2006, the European Parliament meeting in Strasbourg passed a unanimous resolution asking all its member states to freeze all assets of the LTTE including bank accounts, holidays, companies and undertakings. It also called on member states to prevent the LTTE from collecting illegal tax from resident Tamil communities.”⁶⁰

“On June 26, 2006 a suicide bomber on a motorcycle blew himself up as he rammed a car carrying Sri Lanka’s third-highest ranking military officer, killing the general and three other people. Five others were wounded. Authorities quickly blamed the Tamil Tiger rebels for the blast just outside Colombo, with President Mahinda Rajapakse saying that it was part of the “concerted efforts” to derail the peace process in the country.”⁶¹

“Twelve Tamil Tigers rebels and five Navy sailors were killed on June 28, 2006 in a battle close to a naval base along Sri Lanka’s west coast. The navy sunk two rebels boats carrying six guerrillas each and repulsed the guerilla attack with the help of helicopter gunships.”⁶²

“Sri Lankan forces on August 1, 2006 launched a new air and ground offensive to wrest a key reservoir from Tamil rebels who have cut off water to 60,000villagers, while the rebels and sailors exchanged five near an eastern port.”⁶³

“Fighting raged on august 3, 2006 between Government troops and Tamil Tiger rebels in a seaside northeastern town of Muttur, with artillery fire hitting a school where residents had taken shelter, killing 10 people. The Defense Minister blamed the rebels for the artillery attack in the town of Muttur– but the pro-rebel Tamil Net website blamed Government forces. Both sides claimed to have the upper hand in the fighting, but with

the area closed to journalists and other outsiders there was no way to independently verify the situation.”⁶⁴

“On August 3, Tamil Net a newspaper claimed the rebels, who want to carve out a separate home land for Sri Lanka’s 3.2 million minority Tamils, had taken control of parts of Muttur, a Government-held town bordered by rebel – controlled villages and jungle. Intense fighting was under way as “hundreds of heavily armed rebels who have taken control of the town centre laid siege to four Sri Lanka army camps on its periphery.” Government accounts were different.”⁶⁵

“On August 2, 2006 an artillery round hit a church where some 600 people had taken shelter, killing and 8-yearold boy and injuring three women. A Defense Ministry statement said Government forces killed 40 Tigers rebels and wounded 70 on August 2 in heavy fighting in and around Trincomalee, including Muttur. The fighting has also killed seven Government soldiers and wounded 52.”⁶⁶

“A Norwegian envoy arrived in Sri Lanka on August 4 to try to prevent a resumption of full-scale civil war after a sharp escalation in clashes between the military and Tamil Tiger rebels. The rebels and Government forces blamed each other for artillery attacks on August 3 on three schools in a northeastern town that killed 18 residents sheltering there.”⁶⁷

“A senior Tamil Tiger rebel official on August 13th denied Government claims that they had offered to renew peace talks, saying negotiations were impossible amid increased military attacks and the most intense fighting in four years. Earlier on August 13, Palitha Kohona, chief of the Sri Lankan Government’s peace secretariat said the rebels had on August 10, conveyed through a Nordic ceasefire monitoring mission that they are ready for talks and the Government had accepted

the offer. The Nordic mission's spoke man, Thorfinnur Omarsson, said the Tigers had made a verbal request for renewed talks and said they would follow it up with a formal. However, Puleedevan a senior rebel officer denied making any peace overtures. He demanded that the Government should stop their military offensives to allow some 50,000 displaced people to return home before considering a return to peace talks.”⁶⁸

“Sri Lanka on August 15 tightened the security in wake of a mine explosion in the capital targeting a top Pakistani envoy that killed seven people, even as schools were closed ahead of schedule amid fears of attacks by LTTE to avenge the killing of 61 school girls in the northeast. VIP security was tightened and new parking restrictions ordered in the capital. A day after a claymore mine attacked to an autorikshaw blew up near the convoy of Pakistan High Commissioner Bashir Wali Mohamed, who escaped unhurt while four of his Sri Lankan bodyguards and three civilians were killed and 10 others wounded. A UNICEF and a North Peace mediator team visited an orphanage in the northeastern district of Mulaittivu, where an air raid killed 61 girls in August 14th, expressed shock and rejected Colombo's claim that the inmates were LTTE cadre. The Tamil Tiger's observed August 15 as a mourning day for the children killed and injured in the raid.”⁶⁹

“Tamil Tigers launched fresh attacks overnight on key military targets in northern Sri Lanka, where a week of fierce fighting killed more than 800 rebels and security forces, the military said in 17 August, as the country spiraled closer to all-out war. The stepped-up attacks on 16 August in Jaffna Peninsula came as Sri Lanka's President vowed the government would not bow to insurgent demands and withdraw from the north, claimed by Tamil Tiger rebels as the heartland of ethnic Tamil culture. Twenty boats from

the Tiger's feared sea unit attacked a strategic land and naval base in northern Kilaly, off the west coast of Jaffna on August 16 nights, prompting a gun battle that lasted until dawn. The navy sunk three rebel boats, and killed 70 rebels, who had also attacked by land and about 15 soldiers and sailors, had been killed."⁷⁰

"Sinnathamby Sivamaharajah, 68, the managing director of the Jaffna Tamil daily *Namathu Eelanadu* was shot dead on night of 21 August at his temporary residence inside the high security zone of Tellippalai in Jaffna. He was a member of the Tamil National Alliance, a political party believed to be proxy of the LTTE. There was no immediate claim of responsibility."⁷¹

"Sri Lankan air force destroyed a Tamil Tiger sea base in the northeast on August 24 as the government said it would consider a new ceasefire with the rebels only if it was offered by their elusive leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Air force planes launched two air strikes in morning and the attack "totally destroyed" a Tiger sea base."⁷²

"A bomb hidden with a dead body in a three-wheeled taxi exploded in embattled north Sri Lanka on September 8, wounding 6 people, including four school girls and a police man. The explosion took place near government-held Vavuniya town on the edge of territory controlled by ethnic Tamil rebels who fought for a separate homeland during a 19-year war with Sinhalese-dominated government starting in 1983. It blamed the Tamil Tigers for the blast. Four ethnic Tamil school girls, between the age of 11 and 14, a policeman and a civilian were wounded, according to officials at Vavuniya hospital where they were taken. The body inside the vehicle was identified as S. Somapala, one of two ethnic Sinhalese men abducted from their village near Vavuniya town on 7 September."⁷³

PRESENT SCENARIO

“Sri Lanka’s main Muslim political party Muslim Congress on 19 September demanded an impartial investigation into the killing of 10 civilians, as residents in parts of the eastern Sri Lankan shut shops and offices to protest these killings that some blame on the government. The mutilated bodies of 10 Muslim laborers were found in a jungle area near Pottuvil town, 250 kilometers east of Colombo, on 18 September. The men were repairing an irrigation system when they were attacked. Residents accuse the government’s special police unit of carrying out the killings, while the government blames separatist Tamil Tigers rebels. “The people have called for a peaceful protest demanding an impartial inquiry,” said Rauff Hakeem, a lawmaker for Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, the main political party representing Muslims. Hakeem said the protesters have also demanded the chief of the police’s Special Task Force be transferred, saying he could be an obstacle to fair investigation.”⁷⁴

“The Government’s security spokesman, Kehiliya Rambukwella, told reporters that the killings had the ‘hall marks’ of the rebels, but promised a thorough investigation. He said the police were being blamed by some people “without concrete evidence.” Muslim are Sri Lanka’s second-largest minority after ethnic (Hindu) Tamils, and generally oppose the Tamil Tigers, who are fighting to carve out a separate homeland for the Tamils. The guerrillas have accused Muslims of supporting the government. The rebels also oppose Muslims cultivating land in areas they consider Tamil territory.”⁷⁵

“On 27 September, Tamil Tigers Supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran agreed to open talks with the Sri Lankan government and pledged “commitment” to the process. “we

need concrete positive commitments from the leader of the LTTE to resume talks and he has given that,” Policy Planning Minister Kehiliya Rambukwella told reporters on September 27, 2006. Rambukwella said, President Mahinda Rajapakse wanted Prabhakaran himself to recommit to the peace process, as the government could not accept the words of the LTTE’s political wing leader and public face Mr. S. P. Thamilselvan.”⁷⁶

“The UN said on September 29 that fighting between Sri Lanka’s separatist Tamil Tigers rebels and government troops has stopped the work to rebuild following the devastating 2004 tsunami. Eric Schwartz, the United Nation’s Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, said in a statement that “the Tsunami recovery process has ground to a halt” in parts of Sri Lanka’s north and east, where fighting has been heavy. “Investments in reconstruction, so generously supported by donors around the World, are now imperiled.” Schwartz said.”⁷⁷

“Escalating violence since April has threatened a four-year-old ceasefire and affected aid work in the volatile northeast, one of the regions worst hit by the Tsunami. Schwartz said he is “deeply disturbed” by a European truce monitors report, which said on 28 September that more than 200 civilians have died in two months of heavy government-guerrilla fighting. Thousands of civilians are at grave risk, cut off from regular supplies of food and other assistance.”⁷⁸

Before Tamil Tigers and government have ceasefire and so many meetings also and for little time they got peace also but afterwards they again started so many conflicts. The Tamil Tigers are asking for their own homeland and the government does not want to give it, Tamil Tigers are killing many people, after two or three days they kill a full family or a minister they attach a mine in car or in autoriksha and blow up a minister. Now

there is no peace in a single place, there is only violence, if it continues like that the Sri Lanka will reach nowhere near peace. Present situation is that the government and the Tamil Tigers are bitter with each other. Sri Lanka has many parties like Muslim party, People Alliance party etc. and they think of their own interests only. No party is really thinking of Sri Lanka's 'Future'.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Today circumstances in Sri Lanka are such that it is difficult to get an insight into the future. Here we are going to go deeply into the present problems hoping that through this exercise we may get some insight into the future of Sri Lanka. The trouble in Sri Lanka began in the early 1980s when Tamils, opposing the government, were organised in various groups of which the LTTE grew to be the strongest. On the beginning the Tamils asked for the separate autonomous province of their own, within the country. Then Sri Lanka's government headed by Jayawardene was not at all favourably disposed to the idea because at that time the Singhalese majority was bitterly opposed to any such ideas. The government foolishly responded by a cruel and brutal suppression of the Tamils supporting or suspected of supporting the demand for autonomy. As a result Tamils got united and rose against this suppression and LTTE grew to be very strong and has since been systematically fighting with the government with such ferociousness that it has come to be known as perhaps the most fierce terrorist organization in the world. Now after about 25 years, when the government seems ready to grant the autonomy, the LTTE's demand has increased and they are not content with autonomy but are asking for a separate country. The Sri Lankan government

feels that it cannot possibly accept this. A good number of Tamils in Tamil Nadu and around the world have been helping the LTTE. Not every Tamil is helping it, some are even against it and its violent acts. Still, Sri Lankan government is not so powerful that it can wipe out the Tamil resistance. Even if the government was strong military, still it cannot simply run over the Tamils because in that case the country may get into much deeper trouble. South of India may be in protest and South of India may force Indian government to help Sri Lankan Tamils to stop their depression by the Sri Lankan government. It is likely that in such a situation if the Indian government failed to take necessary and visible steps to help the Sri Lankan Tamils then may arise a separatist feeling in Tamil Nadu and possibly in the whole of South India. The government in Sri Lanka has to take account of the possible reaction by India and other great powers in the world in its dealing with the LTTE. Given this, the Sri Lankan government cannot only seek any outside army help or undertake any such action which may bring strong reaction from its huge neighbour to its North. That is why Sri Lankan government is hesitant to seek any major help from China or Pakistan. So, this leaves the country in a fix, neither side can win at present. However, if the present situation continues then it is clear that not for long time the LTTE can continue to resist the superior Sri Lankan army. If the Tamils perceive this they may be much more willing to enter into some kind of deal with the government. They cannot fail to realize that they can never accept from India for a separate country and will have to settle for an autonomous state within Sri Lankan federation. One hopes that this will be the case and before too long peace will be established between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka.

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