

# Pre Historical Back Ground of Sri Lankan Tamil Violence Movement (From 1920 to 1970)

Lakmini Gamage

Senior Lecturer, Department of History, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka

**Abstract:** *The Sri Lankan Civil War is one of the most popular issues in international political arena. From late 1970 to 2009, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) waged in a violent struggle against Sri Lankan government with expecting a separate state in Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. Over the course of conflict, both sides engaged in a fierce military confrontations. Mainly territories in Northern and Eastern were directly affected worst deadly experiences while the entire island was threatened by suicide bombings and other deadly attacks because of this long-term brutal war. Sri Lankan economy and people were drastically damaged during this long period. In respect of those huge deadly effects, various researchers have engaged in numerous attempts to find out why and how such kind of situation emerges in Sri Lankan society. LTTE organization and its related violence were emerged in late 1970s, though it is important to note down here pre- conditions which behind of Tamil violence were created through a long period. Sinhalese and Tamils had lived with unity and harmony during the thousands of years in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, most critical issues, which were negatively affected in respect of Sinhalese and Tamil relationship, were taken place in the period of from 1920 to 1970s. Finally, Tamils were pushed towards violent path by these background conditions. Therefore following analyze will be devoted to find out about historical background which were in path of Tamil militancy before 1970.*

**Keywords:** Sinhalese, Tamils, language, colonization, professions, elite leaders, ethnic

## 1. Unity of Sinhala Tamil elite class leaders during the period of first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century

Westernized Sri Lankan elite class leaders had engaged in political agitation movement in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both Sinhala and Tamil elite class leaders were included in that group. The most significant sign of this period, unity and harmony, which existed in between Sinhala and Tamil leaders. Even Tamils were one of the minority communities in Sri Lanka, Tamil leaders also engaged in tit for tat exercises with Sinhala leaders in order to achieve constitutional reforms in Sri Lanka. Because high class Tamils were deserved special favoritism from the colonial rulers as a result of "divide and ruling policy"; which was part of British colonial ruling policy. Therefore, British rulers provided high-class English education facilities for the Jaffna peninsula rather than Sinhala areas. Prior to this high caste Jaffna Tamils were able to receive perfect English language oriented education and was able to maintain high-class social level. According to their educational background high caste Tamils were qualified to enter for the distinguish professions. As a result of those benefits Tamils were able to engage in tit for tat exercise with Sinhala leaders in political agitation movement. Some Tamil leaders, like Ponnambalam Ramanathan and, Ponnambalam Arunachalam were held most prominent stranded in that particular period. According to this political jargon of the day, Tamils were not regarded and did not regard themselves as a minority community rather than other similar majority community like Sinhalese. (Silva, 1967, p 90). Therefore both Sinhala and Tamil leaders had provided similar participation for the political movement and there were no appeared remarkable disagreements among them. In order to this, none of Sinhala or Tamil leaders wished anything in ethnic angle rather than focusing reforms for whole Sri Lanka. Both leaders emphasized about rights and needs, which subjected to both communities.

It is sufficient to point out certain examples from Sri Lankan history of this period, to reflect, unity of both leaders. Some remarkable examples can be taken from the election which held in December 1911 regarding this matter. There was a sharp contest to select educative representative for the Legislative Assembly in between Ponnambalam Ramanathan and Marcus Fernando. According to Gunasingham (1999, p 208) Marcus Fernando was deserved much of benefits to win this contest. As an example, he received direct support from traditional Sinhala Mudaliyars. They were the most powerful group in the traditional society. Similarly, Marcus Fernando was able to gain supports from number of prominent leaders who had been engaging in current political agitation movement. Colonial rulers also expected to victory of Marcus Fernando. (Gunasingham, 1999, p 208). Even though, the Tamil leader Ponnambalam Ramanathan received maximum votes and won the election. When Ponnambalam received 1645 votes and Fernando received only 981 votes that concurrently. Most important thing is in this regard, maximum voters who qualified to use vote rights were represented from the Sinhala community in 1911. (Roberts, 1977, p 40) Therefore the visible truth was, Sinhalese never considered about ethnicity of leaders rather than concern of their social services and political importance. In order to this Sinhala, voters recognized Ponnambalam Ramanathan as a great leader of completely Sri Lankan nation's even though he is a Tamil leader.

Another most significant thing is the behavior of Ponnambalam Ramanathan. After he entered the Legislative Assembly, he dedicated his services for completely Sri Lankan communities. Especially he emphasized about rights of Sinhalese. As a result of 1915 riots, number of Sinhala Buddhist leaders and also innocent Sinhala civilians were severely suppressed by the British rulers. In this painful occasion, Ponnambalam dedicated his maximum capacity of ability in the Legislative Assembly, to convince the British, regarding innocence of Sinhala leaders and

Sinhala civilians. According to a contemporary newspaper, sometimes he had done most sensitive and lengthy speeches during the two and half hours continuous period which emphasizing about loyalty and innocent of Sinhalese.(Dinamina 16.10.1915)As pointed out in the Sinhala newspaper, Sinhala community should never forget out valuable service of PonnambalamRamanathan in this period. Prominent historian K,M,de Silva also clearly analyzed about this situation as followers, "Ramanathan"s services to the Sinhala Buddhist community in general won him their respect and tribute."(Silva, 1981, p 367). Tamil historian M.Vythilingam also has given following statement regarding the services of Ramanathan in subjected to Sinhala community. "----the riots gave him one of the grandest opportunities of serving our Sinhalese brethren" (Vythilingam, 1977, p 230).

Because of 1915 riots and its related suppressions, were created a perfect platform to build up the strongest unity among national leaders more than before. Because even there were unity and harmony among national leaders up to now, there was not any appeared strong national organization in Sri Lanka. Elite leaders had been organized under variety of separate organizations. Most probably they had been organized according to their different ethnicities. Therefore, all leaders paid their attention to established powerful organization, which had included all Sri Lankan nationalities. They expected to do most intensive influences over British rulers through such a powerful, united organization. They believed that, if there were a united, strong organization among them, colonial rulers were not able to do such a brutal attack over Sinhalese in 1915. Therefore, Ponnambalam Arunachalam who was the most distinguished Tamil leader in this period came forward, to accompany, various leaders of different ethnicities to take common platform. He engaged in a difficult attempt in certain years to achieve success of this purpose. However, after tiresome exercise he could establish Ceylon National Congress (CNC) in 1919. The foundation of the CNC, men like Ponnambalam Arunachalam hoped, would mark a turning point in Ceylon politics. They regarded the Congress as a truly national organization through which the island"s various communities, and especially its two majority communities, the Sinhalese and Tamils, could pursue their common goal of responsible government of Ceylon. (Silva, 1972, p97). Ponnambalam Arunachalam was automatically selected as the first president of CNC as he was the most prominent political figure of his day. His leadership was highly acknowledged by elite class Sinhala leaders on this political jargon.

## **2. Emerging of disagreements in between Sinhala Tamil elite class leaders (from 1920 to 1948)**

When establishing the CNC in 1919 all elite class leaders highly acknowledged the twin principle of communal harmony and national unity. But unfortunately they were unable to continue this unity long last. In the beginning of 1920s unity and harmony which existed among Sinhala and Tamil elites drastically damaged. As mentioned previously, Tamil elites were able to receive special offerings from

British rulers over Sinhala elites according to divide and ruling policy. Usually colonial rulers, based on communal representation method, when selecting representatives for the Legislative Assembly according to the Governor"s wish. Because of the special favoritism of Governor, elite class Tamil leaders able to receive appropriate opportunities in the Legislative Assembly. For example, even Tamils were a minority community they received similar representation with Sinhalese in the 1911 constitutional reforms. Even though when establish CNC Sinhala elites emphasized territorial representation method and expected maximum representations in the Legislative Assemble according to their majority ratio level .But in that occasion Tamil leaders emphasized that according to the proposed system, their representation would be drastically reduced in comparison with 1911 constitutional reforms. Therefore, at the very outset, Tamil leaders refused to join CNC until their position was safeguarded. However, Arunachalam personally engaged in strong discussions with both Sinhala Tamil elites regarding this matter and he was able to come towards a negotiation when November 1918. These negotiations centered on a special seat for the Tamils in the western province. Predominantly a Sinhalese area but with significance numbers of Tamils, in order to maintain the balance of power between both communities under the coming reform measures.(Gunasingham, 1999 ,p212). In support of this assurance two prominent Sinhala leaders who were James Peiris and E.J.Samarawikrama had given written pledge for the Tamils. These statement confirm that the Sinhalese elites "pledged" to the Tamils that their interests and political rights would be safeguarded by the new reforms, and because of their undeniable faith and respect for Arunachalam and his honesty, and also because he was both witness and mediator to the negotiations, Tamil leaders finally agreed.(Gunasingham, 1999 ,p 213) .

Next constitutional reform was introduced by Governor Manning which mainly blend of both communal and territorial representation. Introduction of territorially based representation signified the beginning of the island"s movement towards the political democracy.(Bandarage 2009,p 34). Even though this introduction was directly subjected to create ethnic marginalization of Sri Lanka. The first elections to the reformed Legislative Council based on territorial representation in 1921 changed the balance of in favor of the majority community bringing 13 Sinhalese as against three Tamils. (Bandarage 2009,p 34). As a result of reduce the Tamil representations in the Legislative Assembly, Tamil members started immediate campaign to restore the pre-existing ratio in between Sinhalese and Tamils. In order to that, Tamil leaders demanded for a special communal seat in the western province, which had been previously promised by Sinhala leaders. At the first time of the Sri Lankan history, Sinhala and Tamil elites were entered into a conflict, in order to this special sheet. As pointed out by Bandarage, (2009), Silva (1972), Gunasingham (1999), Governor Manning directly and indirectly involved with this problem and also gave most intensive encouragements to deliberately develop this question among both leaders. Because he identified that unity of both Sinhala and Tamil leaders which had been established in CNC would be a big threat for the British rule. At the end, Tamil leaders were not able to achieve

special sheet in western province and relationship of both leaders were drastically damaged. The *Morning Star* of 20<sup>th</sup> August 1921 has observed about this issue as follows, “the pledge given by Sinhalese leaders to the Tamil leaders earlier, that a seat would be reserved for a Tamil representative in the western province, was broken few days ago at a committee meeting of the CNC. One leader declared that it is not necessary to stick to earlier undertakings as changes have to be made according to changing times and circumstances”. These events created deep rift between both leaders and eventually Arunachalam and most of the Tamil leaders left the CNC with disappointment over Sinhala leaders. Soon after the departure from the CNC Tamil leaders formed a new organization, “Tamil Mahajana Sabha” (literally, Tamil people’s Assembly) in August 1921 to better serve the Tamil community in their political struggle. In 1923 Ceylon Tamil League was formed by under leadership of Arunachalam to give vigorous expression to the demands of the Tamils, who now came to see themselves as a minority community needing to resist Sinhala majoritarian dominance. (Bandarage, 2009, p 35). Since then there were numerous discussions among some of the Sinhala and Tamil leaders to reestablish unity with both elites. Contemporary newspapers also engaged in a strong debates which earnestly requesting from both leaders to turn towards a common platform. (Dinamina 1921.12.21,22,23). However, none of these attempts was not succeeding. Both leaders selected different directions to obtain their targets.

After coming in to the period, it is clearly visible that further development of disagreement in between Sinhala and Tamil elites. In 1931, universal franchise based on territorial representation method was introduced for the Sri Lanka through the Donoughmore reforms. Concurrently communal representation method was abolished. The system of communal representation was argued to generate attitudes of divisiveness among the people, but it was concurrently seen as a safeguard against majority domination. Therefore new introductions were strongly criticized by Tamil leaders. As pointed out them, this system would be directly subjected to create permanent Sinhala dominance in the future of Sri Lanka. Because in a country where two third of population is Sinhalese. Ponnambalam Ramanathan even traveled to England and argued against the electoral democracy which introduced by Donoughmore proposals. Professor Manogaran expressed about feelings of Tamils in this juncture. “Tamil political leaders realized, for the first time since 1833, that they represented a minority community and that they should demand adequate constitutional safeguard from the colonial rulers to defend Tamil rights in the face of the rising tide of Sinhala nationalism.” (Manogaran, 1987, P. 34)

But the Donoughmore commission did not do anything to change their proposal. The election of 1931 on the basis of the Donoughmore reforms, created significant changes in the legislature regarding composition. As a result of resentment of the Tamil leaders, they boycotted this election. Therefore Sinhala leaders obtained majority of government and which came to be known as Pan –Sinhalese Government. In order to this Tamil leaders pointed out that they had been clearly skipped down in current political arena. Even though some analysis have observed this situation by another angle.

According to them Sinhala Buddhist majority who had been marginalized during 400 years of colonial domination and a diminution of the power of the minority, especially the Sri Lankan Tamils who had benefited from colonial rule. (Wickramasinghe, 1996, pp105, 113). Therefore, as a result of democratic principles which introduced by the British, majority Sinhalese who discriminated in colonial period had been acquired maximum benefits according to their ratio level. (Bandarage, 2009, p 36)

Even though Tamil leaders never wished to accept such a majority, minority concept. According to them under current position, they have drastically discriminated when compare previous level of Tamil. Therefore they were scared about dominance level of Sinhalese in the Legislative Assembly and emphasized “balanced representation” which came to be known as “scheme of fifty –fifty”. In order to this Sinhalese would have 50 present representation and minorities would share other remaining 50 present in any future reformed legislator. However as the Sinhalese at the time constituted for approximately 70 percent of the population the proposal was rejected. Meantime, Independence was granted to Sri Lanka in 1948 and established a single vote parliamentary system adopting territorial representation in place of communal. After received majority vote’s strength from the election of 1947, a ruling government was formed by United National Party (UNP). D.S. Senanayaka the leader of UNP became as a first Prime Minister of independence Sri Lanka.

### **3. Emerging of ethnic hostiles in between two major communities (From 1948 to 1970)**

When considering about ethnic hostiles in Sri Lanka, the period of 1948 to 1970 was remarkable. Because this period is directly subjected to create ethnic hostilities between two chief communities. Up to now, there were no significance ethnic tensions among Sinhalese and Tamils rather than some kind of disagreements in between Sinhala and Tamil elites regarding representations of Legislative Assembly. Both communities lived with unity and harmony during the long period. They had maintained socio economic and political interrelation ship among them since ancient period. Even though since during the post-independence period relationship of both communities was drastically damaged as a result of Sinhalese favorable policies which introduced by majority Sinhalese government.

One of the first acts of the independent government was to pass citizenship legislations regarding Indian Tamil population. This particular community also qualified to receive universal franchise according to Donoughmore commission. Therefore the 1947 elections had returned 6 representatives from the Ceylon Indian Congress (CIC) based on the votes of the franchised hill country Tamils. Although the Kandyan Sinhalese worried about this tendency as their electoral base diluted by a large influx of Indian Tamil votes. In another side, hill country Tamils were organized by Marxist leaders for trade union activities during the previous years. Therefore D. S. Senanyaka also feared about vote strength of hill country Tamils as it would be directly or indirectly subject to develop of Marxist’s activities over conservative UNP. According to this situation

UNP government took immediate actions to suppressed vote power of Indian Tamils. In order to that D.S.Senayaka introduced following acts, Citizenship Act of 1948, and the Indian Pakistani residents (Citizenship) Act of 1949. According to the acts a person could acquire

Citizenship in two ways: by descent or registration. However, the majority of the hill country Tamil people who could not justify their citizenship as requested by acts. In terms of inability of Indian Tamils, who lost both their citizenship and their franchise rights. This move not only left the Indian Tamils stateless but it also created a tremendous distortion in the electoral pattern of the country. After the 1947 general elections, there were seven Indian members in a parliament of 101 members. After the enactment of the new citizenship and voting rights legislation, the number of Indian Tamil representatives in parliament was reduced to zero. Their previous electoral sheets were monopolized by majority Sinhalese. This situation clearly subject to limited political participation of Tamil community.

While reducing composition of Tamils, in the political participation, Tamil leaders entered to establish ethnic base organizations to illuminate their particular rights. This tendency was clearly visible after 1920s. But after independence this situation was most remarkable. Citizenship issue which previously discussed, was never created a major conflict in between Sinhalese and Tamils. Even though it was directly subjected to create massive changes in Tamil politics. For example, immediately after implement citizenship acts in the parliament, Tamil leaders entered to emphasize federalism at the first time of history. In order to that, most significances Tamil organization which was emerged, Sri Lanka Tamil State Party ITAK (IllankiThamilArasuKadchi) which formed by S. J. V. Chelvanayakam in 1949. Mainly this party was established with requesting federal political structure and regional autonomy for the Tamils. (Silva, 1988,p153) Later on, this name has been changed as Federal Party (FP). The main attempt of PF was, to organize the Tamil community under common national flag. FP did prominent task to develop ethno-nationalism attitudes against Sinhalese dominance, among Tamil community during the period from 1949 to beginning of 1970s.

After independence ethno nationalism attitudes were most significance not only among Tamils but also majority Sinhalese. Both communities were more ambitious to achieve rights and opportunities for their own nationality. When pay considerable attention towards Sinhalese side, they expected maximum opportunities from the government as Sinhala representatives were a dominant factor in the parliament. Because as mentioned previously even Sinhalese were the majority community, they experienced less privileges in the British rule when compare about Tamil representation in education and professional fields. Therefore they believed that they should have prominent opportunities according to their ratio level. In order to that majority, Sinhalese government bent to introduce number of Sinhala favorable policies. However, those policies, which subjected to create tremendous tension between the two ethnic groups.

Among number of policies which introduced by Sinhalese government, "colonization", or the state sponsored land resettlement program was most significance. According to this policy, the government launched a series of resettlement projects selecting Sinhala people from the over-crowded southern areas and the hill country of the island in order to establish new settlements in the dry zone. In another hand, dry zone was most related with glorious civilizations of Sinhalese. Therefore Sinhala Buddhist nationalists emphasized that the dry zone was their one of ancient heritage. In order to that, these historical beliefs provided perfect dimensions for the Sinhalese government to introduce Sinhala oriented development project in the dry zone. Similarly, Sinhala government(s) believed, that through resettle of Sinhala people around those territories, they would obtain majority amount of votes from them. In 1957 Chelvanayakam directly pointed out that, their composition of parliament had been reduced as a result of colonization project. (Hansard, 17.07.1957) Proposed settlement program mainly focused on peripheral regions of Northern and Eastern province which had been lived predominant number of Tamils. Therefore at the very outset Tamil leaders strongly criticized this program. According to them those provinces were included in "Traditional Homeland" of Tamils. A.J. Wilson, described, "the colonization schemes were deliberately interposed so as to break the geographical contiguity of the two Tamil provinces". (Wilson, 1984, p 159) Tamil leaders pointed out that, according to this scheme, when increasing of Sinhala population around those regions, it could distort the original demographic picture in those particular areas where the Tamil population was the majority. The opposition of Sinhala colonization were clearly appeared even in agenda of PF." According to Manoogaran during the period of 1953-1981, 165,000 Sinhalese were added to the population in the Eastern and Northern provinces. (Manoogaran, 1987, p 97). Robert Kerney also have given following statement regarding demographic changes of dry zone after colonization. "The north and east, the areas of Traditional Tamil Homeland, have undergone major shifts in ethnic composition over recent decades." (Kerney, 1987, p522). "Wriggins also has observed that how to create ethnic discards in between Sinhalese and Tamils in order to colonization scheme." "Clearing and irrigating jungle land to be settled by peasants from the overcrowded Sinhalese and Tamil areas became a bitter apple of discord between the two communities. Tamils consider these new lands to be areas they have traditionally inhabited. The Sinhalese see much historical evidence to prove that Buddhist civilization once flourished before the jungle and malaria made their conquest. Both argue that the settlement of peasants from other communities represent encroachment. And since political representation goes according to territorial constituencies, a significant change in the population structure of such areas would alter the balance of communal representation in the House of Representatives. Hence, even land development has sharpened group conflict." (Wriggins, 1962, pp 568-569)

Though colonization project had been subjected to sharp ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, language issue was the most prominent fact which directly subjected to create ethnic hostiles among two chief nations in the coming period. Since

then PF was successfully mobilized Tamil people to supporting towards party's objectives.

Some liberal policies like free education system, expanding of education opportunities were introduced by British even before the independence. Therefore children from rural areas also were able to receive education opportunities. But most probably their education was depend on vernacular languages. In order to that they did not have enough opportunities to enter the distinguish professions, as Sri Lankan official language was English, even after independence. By the time of the independence, the English educated local elite groups made up only 7% of the total population of the island.

**Table 1:** Languages Spoken by Persons of 1953

Languages Spoken	Numbers	Percentage
Sinhala Only	1,289,957	58.9
Tamil Only	1,570,084	21.6
English Only	11,066	0.2
Sinhala and English	719,194	9.9
Sinhala and Tamil	307,570	1.2
Tamil and English	146,549	2.0
Sinhala, Tamil and English	233,567	3.2
Total	7,280,987	100

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Ceylon, 1953, Vol, 3,

According to above chart, it can be clearly identify that majority amount of Sinhalese were not able to access English education. Therefore, even since colonial period, strong tendencies were emerged with emphasis on empowering the vernaculars. Most significances influences were visible regarding Sinhalese side rather than Tamils. Tamils were not enthusiastic about vernaculars in colonial period, because the British policies put the Tamils at an advantage and they were thus in a better position to gain access to an English education.(Samaranayaka,1991,p 149) But after independence this situation was changed. Sinhala Buddhist agitators strongly requested that, Sinhala should be the official language instead of English. Contemporary prominent Sinhala political parties both UNP and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), previously accept both Sinhala and Tamil oriented attitudes .But when this slogan became more powerful in the Sinhala society, *two languages policy* was changed by both parties and accepted one language, which was *Sinhala only* .In order to this change they expected political supports of Sinhala Buddhists forces for the coming election in 1956. The official language issue was the dominant camphene in the election. Western educated, Sinhala aristocratic leader S.W.R.D.Bandaranaika was the most prominent political figure of this period. He has focused Sinhalese ethnic interests even in 1930s through *Sinhala Mahasabawa*. In 1956 election, he contested under MahajanaEksathPeramuna (MEP –The People's United Front) with avowing to make Sinhala the national language in "24 hours" if voted into office. (Bandarage,2009,p 42).Under this election promise he received a massive

electoral victory in election 1956. Segments of the population who were marginalized under colonial dominants, like Buddhist monks, indigenous Ayurvedic doctors, Sinhala teachers, peasants and workers gave their fullest support to Bandaranika with huge expectations. Therefore immediately after formed the government, Pre Minister Bandaranaika introduced the Official Language Act, no 33 of 1956, which made Sinhala "the one official language of Ceylon without qualifications to protect minority rights." (Kearney, 1967 pp82-84).

After implementation of official language bill, it was marked the beginning of the new phase of Sinhala Tamil ethnic relationship. Sinhala only bill was directly subjected to develop language oriented ethnic nationalism among two chief communities. With the rice of linguistic nationalism among Sinhalese even before the election, Tamils entered to find out a secure position against the Sinhalese dominance. In order to that PF received maximum votes from the Northern and Eastern provinces in the 1956 election. It is the first time since independence the PF came prominence without linkage of Sinhala political parties. (Bandarage, 2009, p45) New position of PF was directly subjected to develop linguistic nationalism among Tamil community. Tamil leaders claimed that the Sinhala language legislation would bring in an era of "apartheid" with Sinhalese as the "masters and rulers" and Tamil would be forced to "accept subject status under them" (Bandarage,2009, p45). Leader of PF , S. J. V. Chelvanayakam argued that in the absence of linguistic parity ,Tamils had no alternative but seek federalism or separatism. (Bandarage,2009,p45) . As the Tamils saw it, to make Sinhalese the sole official language put Tamils in an inferior position and would no doubt give the Sinhalese-speaking people a competitive advantage in the entrance to public service, teaching, education and other desirable careers.(Wriggins,1961,p317).Similarly they identified that it would as a big threat for their identity and culture. Tamil people started number of movements against Sinhala only Bill. FP provided their direct and indirect intensive motivations to Tamil community for start opposition campaign. This Tamil involvement created perfect background to start ethnic violence. Numerous sabotages were taken place around the provinces of Northern and Eastern. Number of Tamil people gathered in Hindu Kovils which located in Northern and Eastern provinces and engaged in praying process over Sinhala only Bill. When observe about contemporary newspapers, number of incidents has been reported that which were subjected to ethnic commotions. For example, the PF under Chelvanayakam's leadership had staged a peaceful *Satyagraha* (boycott) against the Sinhala only Bill at Galle Face Green in Colombo on 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1956.While carry on this protest, number of Sinhala people pounced upon there with shouting as "No need Tamil". In this occasion some Tamil leaders also were injured as a result of Sinhala nationalist's reactions. (Lankadeepa, 06.06.1956). Sevier ethnic riots were quickly flared up around the country. Both communities engaged in hostile behaviors over each other. Gal Oya, Ampara areas were most remarkable in this regard because both Tamil and Sinhala people had scatted in those areas. Pre Minister Bandaranaika kindly requested from every citizens over radio, that to stop all kind of criminal engagement. Even though those activities were never

stopped until remarkable period. Sinhala and Tamil relationship was drastically damaged since this landmark. PF was successfully established their stand among Tamil community within introduction of Sinhala only Bill. Variety of boycott movement were organized by PF to express Tamil oppositions. On February of 1957, they organized a *Hartal* against Sinhala only Bill and Citizenship Acts. In this occasion both acts were burnt down while playing moaning music. (Dinamina 05.02.1957) Similarly, in the parliament they engaged in strong debates to protect Tamil rights. One member of PF Mr. Navarathnam stated that after his lengthy speech, "We want this constitution done away with we want to replace it with a federal constitution so that all the people of the country can live as one nation." (Hansard 1957, June p 209) Wilson also has pointed out that "Chelvanayakam and his party had now moved from cantonal to regional federalism" (Wilson, 1994, p 83)

In the coming period Sinhala Tamil disagreement was rapidly developed. Civil disobedient and non-violent movements were led by the PF over policies of Sinhala government. At the end of 1950s government, implemented Sinhala Sri symbolized policy. According to this policy Sinhala letter "Sri" should be display in vehicle license plates. Though Sinhalese people accept this policy, Tamils were severely disappointed. PF organized a mass civil disobedient movement around Northern and Eastern provinces. They published a common statement which informing to Tamil people that they should use only Tamil „Sri“ symbol for their vehicle. (Dinamina, 01.17.1957) Under encouragement of PF, Tamil people of Northern and Eastern provinces, engaged in various obstructions when vehicles, try to enter in those particular regions with indicated in Sinhala „Sri“. (Dinamina, 08.01.1957). As pointed out Dinamina newspaper, sometimes even Sinhala government ministers were not allowed to enter the Northern provinces as a result of Tamil opposing. (Dinamina, 03.06.1957) When increasing anti -Sri campaign in Northern led to a counter response against Tamil lettering ,on street signs and name boards in the Sinhala areas, specially Colombo. (DeVotta, 2004, pp 110-111) . The horrific "race -riots" were emerged as ultimate result of these actions. Sinhalese and Tamils were both aggressors and victims. (Bandarage, 2009, p 50). Toll of between 500-600 human beings were lost due to this communal violence. Sri Lankan political situation had been entering the path towards drastic growth of interactive ethno-nationalism. Although the Sinhala government(s) moved to allay the fears of the Tamil community, through introducing various acts and pacts. For example Bandaranaike -Chelvanayakam pact 1958, Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958, Chelvanayakam - Senanayaka pact 1965 etc. But none of these attempts were get succeed under the virulent protest of Sinhala political and non-political groups. Thus, Tamil politicians began to perceive the government as being biased towards the majority and alienating the minority.

After implement of Sinhala only policy, Sinhala government(s) moved to expand social welfare distributions further more. Immediate results of those policies were directly subjected to discriminate of Tamils in socio-political and economic fields in Sri Lanka. In 1960s, Sri Lankan

people had achieved high rates of literacy ability as a result of development of free education system which introduced since 1940s. Similarly government entered to develop Sri Lankan education system, through establishing new primary and secondary schools even in rural areas. New universities also were established. Further, education medium also was turned towards vernaculars. (Sinhala or Tamil). Therefore, majority Sinhalese who discriminated in colonial rule acquired maximum benefits in the educational field. Amount of educated Sinhala rural youths were rapidly increased. Even though as mentioned previously education based on vernaculars was received ill treatment under colonial rulers. Only for the elite class community received English language base education, which were directly subjected to acquire distinguish professions. As mentioned before the Tamil participation was most significance in this regard when compare with Sinhalese compositions. Even though, in the current condition this situation was clearly changed. Under the Sinhala only act, medium of Sri Lankan administration also was turned from English to Sinhala. In order to that, youths who received Sinhala medium base education were deserved easy access of government service. Tamil representation was concurrently reduced in the government service due to barrier of language. R. N. Kearney notes that: "A rapidly worsening employment situation was felt with particular severity by Tamil youth as they suffered not only from the general dearth of employment opportunities but from disadvantages and discrimination in obtaining the few existing jobs" (Kerney, 1975, pp 49,50). Similarly Sri Lankan state sector was gradually politicized after 1960s. According to this political patronage ruling parties entered to recruiting their carders for the government professions as a habit which long term existed. The absence of Tamil politicians from government after 1956 placed the Tamil youth in a most disadvantageous position. (Samaranayaka, 1991p 154) Newton Gunasinghe states thus: irrespective of the regime being U. N. P. or S. L. F. P. opportunities existed for Sinhala youth to build up patron-client linkages with local politicians and press themselves forward. The Tamil Youth, especially those of the north and the east, did not enjoy this advantage, as their local politicians represented regional ethnic parties, enjoying no power at the center. (Gunasingha, 1984, p 199). Following table will provide crystal identification regarding decreased of Tamil representations in professional fields after 1956.

**Table 2: Percentage of Tamils Employed in the State Sector**

Services	1956	1965	1970
Sri Lanka Administrative Services	30	20	5
Clerical	50	30	5
Professions	60	30	10
Aimed Forces	40	20	1
Labor	40	20	5

Source: U. Phadnis, "Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia", India Quarterly, Vol, 35, Part 3, (1979), p. 348, Quoted by Samaranayka 1991 p 154

Ratio representation of Tamils in the state sector had been significantly declined, when compare about their composition with colonial period. It is possible to identify regarding this situation through following observation.

“ Prior to the granting of independence in 1948, the Tamils had an advantage over the Sinhalese in securing admission to the state services because educational facilities were readily available to them, as a result of a number of mission schools being set up in the Northern Province. With the granting of independence and the development of educational facilities in the non-Tamil areas it was to be expected that this advantageous position that they occupied would be steadily excluded. Over the years the intake of Sinhalese into the state sector had been comparatively increasing.” (Ministry of Defense 1976, quoted by Samaranayaka, 1991, p 155) Even though the Sinhalese saw the current changes „as reversing the discrimination they had been subjected to in the past”; while the Tamils felt they were being deliberately discriminated against. (Balasuriya, 2012). They thought that Sinhalese have been stolen their previous opportunities.

Therefore as discussed above, when end of 1960s, Tamils had been clearly marginalized in the various fields. This situation provided perfect background to increase frustration and disappointment among Tamil community. Gradually Tamil youths had been moving towards violent actions. According to Indian journalist Narayan Swamy some Tamil youths had entered to form underground organizations even in 1961. PF also had given their blessings for such developments in the emerging stage. “Some 20 men associated with the Federal Party ---decided after long deliberations to form an underground group to fight for a separate state. Most of them were civil servants -At a meeting in Colombo they christened their group PulipPadai (Army of Tigers). A springing tiger was chosen as its insignia -Some members succeeded in influencing the decisions of the Federal Party. One section floated a trawler company in Colombo to facilitate smuggling of arms should the need arise” (Swamy, 1995, p 24). Those youths accompanied in Koneshvaran Kovil in Trinkomali on 12<sup>th</sup> August in 1961, and engaged in an oath mentioning that they will actively participate to win „Tamil Motherland”. They established a radical student section (which name was “ManvarManaram”) with hoping develop radical activities among Tamil community. Those radical Tamil youths distributed various illegal documents among Tamils to increase anti-Sinhala attitudes in the Tamil society. Even though According to Bandarage (2009) this organization was broken, up and eventually withered away because of PF join the UNP in the 1965 election. (Bandarage, 2009, p 51) But inspirations and activities of PulipPadai were remained in Tamil society during the long period. (Swamy, 1995, p 24). They had given starting examples for other Tamil youths also. In this juncture, Tamil youths entered to formed further more anti-government organizations. Kuttumani, a smuggler in Valvettithurai (VVT), formed an informal group, the Tamil Liberation Organization (TLO) during 1967-1969 to carry out violent activities. (Bandarage, 2009, p 66). In the emerging stage Prabhakaran leader of LTTE and his one -time deputy Mahathaya also had joined this organization. (Wilson, 1994, P.20)

Even Tamil youths had been moving towards underground activities, still PF had followed by Federal System to protect Tamil rights. They never advocated the violent behaviors in

public and their common tactics was the non-violent methods still end of 1960s. Even though it is clearly visible when end of 1960s that Tamil people never highly accepted about their leadership further more. Because until they never received enough socio-political and economic benefits from the majority government under leadership of PF. The election of 1970 was one of the good examples, to identify drawback of PF.

The United Front (UF) coalition of the SLFP and the Marxist parties came into power in 1970, receiving two third majority of the parliament. This victory was the landmark of Sri Lankan history as this is the first time Sinhalese leadership formed a government without support of Tamil political parties after independence. Most of leaders of PF like E. M. Naganadan., A. Amirthalingam, Allalasingham, and S. M. Rasamanickam lost their seats. Even Chelvanayakam return only through a plurality of votes. (Bandarage, 2009, p 52). Those election results were significance examples regarding bent down of PF. Similarly another prominent Tamil leaders like G. G. Ponnambalam and M. Sivasithamparam also lost their electoral. (Wilson, 1994, p 113) They also dominant leaders who try to achieve Tamil rights along debating and discussion systems. But defeat of such leaders was reflected that Tamil community never accept such traditional methods further more. They had been searching new tendency with effective and strong influences patterns for win their rights.

#### 4. Conclusion

Even Sinhalese and Tamils had been living in Sri Lanka with unity and harmony since thousands of year’s period, this situation was clearly changed after 1920s. At the pre-independence period it was only appeared disagreement with Sinhala Tamil elite class leaders due to compositions of Legislative Assembly. But in the post-independence period ethnic base disagreements and hostiles were clearly appeared in Sri Lankan society. After independence majority Sinhalese expected maximum socio-economic benefits from the Sinhalese government as they had received minimum socio-economic and political benefits in the colonial period when compare with their ratio level. Therefore according to the presser of Sinhalese nationalist groups government(s) moved to introduce various Sinhala favorable policies. As mentioned previously even Tamils were one of minority community in Sri Lanka, they received maximum opportunities in the colonial period. But under the policies of post-independence period their representations of in various fields of Sri Lanka were clearly discrete. They should engaged in a huge open competition with Sinhalese to achieve existed limited socio-economic benefits. But real situation was ultimately majority Sinhalese had maintained dominance level in socio-economic and political fields as a result of their majority ratio level. Under this situation Tamils were strongly disappointed about their current situation. Concurrently ethnicity base nationalism also spread out among Tamil community. PF did prominent task to develop ethnic nationalism among Tamils. Even though until beginning of 1970 elite Tamil politicians commonly accepted non-violent methods to achieve rights of Tamils. But in that period Tamil youth never accepted such methods further more to acquire their expectations

from Sinhalese government. Gradually they mobilized as violently in the Tamil society of Northern provinces.

Currently in Sri Lanka's bloody twenty – six year civil war is over. However, end of the war does not mean the underlying conflict has been resolved. The Sinhala –Tamil divide remains wide and Sri Lanka has been moving from to post war period to post –conflict era.(Abuldeniya,2013) In order to that immediate political solutions should be need to keep long-term unity and harmony with Sinhalese and Tamils. Above discussion will be help to identify that how to create ethnic marginalization and ethnic disagreement in Sri Lankan society. In respect of that, it can be taken clear ideas regarding reasons, facts and issues, which were subjected to create ethnic disagreement at the emerging ages. Therefore, Sri Lankan should be move to introduce strong solutions for such grass root reasons which were subjected to ethnic hostiles. Unless Sri Lanka will not receive sustainable peace.

## References

- [1] Abuldeniya,,D,(2013),Ethnic Conflict, Horizontal Inequalities And Development Policies ;The Case of Sri Lanka ,PhD thesis available at <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/13540>
- [2] Balasuriya, Ajith(2012),“Search for common grounds ; Tamil caste system as „A Spoiler „, in post –conflict peace building in Northern Sri Lanka.(archive.cmb.ac.lk/research/bitstrem/70130/2707 )
- [3] Bandarage,Asoka(2009),The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka, Terrorism, Ethnicity ,Political Economy ,New York.
- [4] DeVotta,N (2004) Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay ,and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka ,Stanford University Press.
- [5] Gunasingham,M, (1999) *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: A study of its origins*.Sydney :MIVP publications.
- [6] Gunasinghe,N (1994)"*Open Economy and Its Impact for Rational Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka*", in Committee for Rational Development, Sri Lanka: The Ethnic Conflict, Myths Realities and Perspectives, New Delhi
- [7] Kearney,R.N(1975) "*Political Mobilization in Contemporary South Asia*", in Robert I. Crame, (ed), Aspects of Political Mobilization in South Asia, (Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs)
- [8] Keamey,R.N,(1987)"Territorial Element of Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka' , Pacific Affairs, Vol 1, No. 4,
- [9] Kearney,R.N(1967) Communalism and Language in the politics of Ceylon, DukeUniversity press.
- [10]Manogaran,C 1987, Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press)
- [11]Roberts,M (1977) ,Documents of the Ceylon National Congress and Nationalist Politics in Ceylon 1929-1950Vol 1 ,(already translated to Sinhala language by Government Language Department of Sri Lanka),Colombo.
- [12]Samaranayaka,G (1991)Political Violence In The Third World ;A Case Study Of Sri Lanka 1971-1987, PhD Thesis available at <http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>
- [13]Silva,K.M.De,(1972) ,”*The Ceylon National Congress In Disarray,1920-1:Sir PonnambalamArunachalam Leaves the Congress*”*The Ceylon Journal of Historical & Social Studies* ,Vol-11 ,July –December ,No 2.
- [14]Silva,K.M.De(1967) *The formation and character of the Ceylon National Congress 1917-1919* , The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies. Vol 10, January –December, NS (1&2)
- [15]Silva K.M.De,( 1981),A History of Sri Lanka, Delhi .
- [16]Swamy,M.R.N.(1995),Tigers of Sri Lanka ;From Boys to Guerilla, Delhi.
- [17]Vythilingam,M(1977),Ramanathan of Ceylon the life of Sir PonnambalamRamanathan,Voll 11,Ramanathan Commemoration Society,
- [18]Willson,A.J(1994) S.J.V.Chelvanayakam and the Crisis of Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism 1947-1977.Colombo
- [19]Wilson,A.J ,(1994)'*Ethnic Strife in Sri Lanka*', in R.Goldsmann and A.J. Wilson, (eds.),From Independence to Statehood, London.
- [20]Wickramasinghe,N(1996) Ethnic politics in Sri Lanka, New Delhi.
- [21]Wriggins, W,H (1961) "*Impediments to Unity in a New State: The Case of Ceylon*", American Political Science Review, Vol. 55, No. 2,

## Author Profile

**Lakmini Gamage** is Senior Lecturer, Department of History, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka