

Peace in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Two races living on the same land come face to face to fight against each other for their own interests and rights. The history of Sri Lanka from its inception is red with bloodshed between the Tamils and the sinhala. Whereas, the indigenous Tamils remained calm and cool, the migrant Tamils made a group to get their own home land in Sri Lanka by conquering and snatching the piece of land known as Eelam. They struggled, killed general public and the people. There was a time when security forces were tired off and LTTE fighters were aggressive. There was a movement in the history very well known as the event of 9/11 that defined these fighters clearly as terrorists. It further strengthened and encouraged the Sri Lankan government to get the international moral, financial and military support. That ultimately resulted in a national success and LTTE lost the war in 2009. The Government of Sri Lanka faces the challenge of accommodating the Tamils and bringing them into control and making them an educational force of the nation and resolves their all political, economic, social and psychological grievances.

Key words: IDPs, LTTE, IPKFP _ 2, Bengal Ealem, SLFP

A Brief History of Sri Lanka

The history of Sri Lanka shows that between 10th and 15th century Arab traders dominated the region. The Arab traders were prominent in the island. After some period these people started settling themselves especially in the coastal areas. The Arabs were eminent due to their trade in different things like gems, pearl, spices and other such things. The descendents of these Arabs introduced Islam in the region. The Portuguese entered the Island. In 1505 the Portuguese landed in the region of Sri Lanka and captured most of the trading from this area. The Dutch also established them.

The British arrived later and ousted the Dutch during the European war and in 1796 all Dutch-held territories were ceded to the British. At this time the Kings of Kandy were Tamils originating from the Nayakar court, who had inherited the throne through marriage. By 1815 the British fought the Kandyan King and exiled

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him to Tamil Nadu. British reign continued until 1948. It is probably true to say that the last Tamil and Sinhala Kings, ruled as absolute despots were often cruel and whimsical. A network of local feudal aristocracy existed in the Kandyan kingdom and they also behaved with little understanding of citizens' rights and concerns.

Independence

The island of Sri Lanka gained its independence from Britain on February 4, 1948 in accordance with the "Ceylon Independence Act of 1947" (Ross & Sevada, 1988). <http://countrystudies.us/sri-lanka/22.htm>. Soon afterwards the conflict between Tamil and Sinhala emerged. This conflict sharpened over the years and it became violent. The Tamil became aggrieved angry people and they established Tamil United Liberation Front to fight for their rights and in 1976 they passed a resolution to detach Jafana from the rest of state and rename it as Eelam (Jhang, 2009). They also declared it the area meant for Tamils. Later on this united front was renamed and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and this organization slowly absorbed all such organizations and in 1983 they started to organize military movement to achieve Eelam for Tamils.

In 2002 under the arbitration of Norway government there was ceasefire between Tamil and Sri Lankan government. But this peace process finished sooner and the war of terror restarted which continued till 2009 and made a huge volume of destructions at national level. About 70 Thousand people were killed, 7 thousand were injured and 250,000 were made IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons).



The “divide and rule” principle of British completely destroyed the proper function of the nation building institution especially in the subcontinent (now South Asia). Sri Lanka also faced the same problem whereas, the Sinhalese ruling party was in majority and Tamils the minority involved themselves into the issues to get their rights. Tamils are mostly in the East and North of the state land whereas; rest of the part contains Sinhalese. Sinhalese as majority got deepened into the government as a ruling party which raised a sense of regret in Tamils. Tamils demanded for their rights. Tamils were involved in the issues to get self oriented provincial powers and rights of equality. In this time period certain Sri Lankan officials agreed to some of the issues to resolve the problem but due to the pressure of majority keeping Sinhalese Government with drew these contracts. Government withdrawal of contracts created a notion of unavailability in equal rights for Tamils. The figure below shows the ethnic distribution of population.

Analyzing the issue of peace in Sri Lanka involves certain steps. In these steps it is very important to look for the causes to get the logical background. Before discussing these steps three modes declaring LTTE as terrorist are as follows:

- The LTTE killed Sri Lankan security forces and the angry security forces killed the Tamil fighters. This enabled the LTTE to obtain money from Tamil Diaspora. This pushed the LTTE away from liberation movement to terrorist party.
- The survival mode of LTTE was ruthless; there were cold blooded murder that froze all the people, politician, members of security, intellectuals, business man and public in general. It unveiled the terrorist status of LTTE.
- The tactics used by the LTTE filled the security forces. This also indicates essential character of terrorist party.

There are three major steps to understand the problem.

1. First step is to analyze the parties that are involved in the situation of uncertainty.
2. Second step is to look for the real issues and objectives.
3. Third step relates to Socio - economic perspective.

Rivalries Involved

In the first step we will analyze the parties that are involved into this whole scenario. There are two major parties that are internally linked to this whole issue that are the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils (based on ethnicity). If we look into the literature we will find that there are certain forces that are also externally linked to this issue. There are certainly some influential external forces that tried to derive the Tamil tiger issues in Sri Lanka. India and Norway are the most influential external participants that are directly involved (Hennayake, 1989). (Pffaffenberger, (n.d.).

“For India, the war in Sri Lanka seems parallels with Bangladesh situation in 1971, where the roles of Pakistan Army and the Mukti Bahini almost mirror those of Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE in the present conflict. It should be

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remembered that in 1971, India had to intervene militarily to establish Bangladesh as a “Bengal Eelam” to which over 10 million refugees could return in relative security and dignity. But an “IPKFP_2” option to establish an Eelam on the pattern of Bangladesh ...is extremely remote, to the point of absurdity.” (Roychowdhry, 2009) Tamils are one of the most influential parties that are involved internally. The LTTE was founded in 1972 by 18-year old Vellupillai Prabhakaran (Kearney, 1985: 905). The organization was formed to secure the rights of Tamils and the major concern was to protect their homeland Eelam. Almost 36 organizations were operating before 1972. There were some contracts that were to be accomplished for the Tamils but due to opposition of majority Sinhalese Government withdrew their understanding and after that all the Tamil unions joined their hands to form LTTE. After 1972 the major concern of LTTE was to consider the “Eelam” as their central state. “In 1972 the Federal part, the Tamil Congress, and other organizations and individuals banded together to form the Tamil United Front” (Kearney, 1985: 905). But soon after in 1976 these unions united again to form the TULF and the basic concern of these unions were to demand a separate state for Tamils of Sri Lanka (Kearney, 1985: 905).

“In 1976 the Tamils demanded Jafana to make it a separate state and give the name of Eelam”. (Kearney, 1985: 905) Political struggles were at its peak in the seventies. All the struggles for the separate state of Tamils were of no use. So, such a situation created the expressions of extremists in some of the adults. TULF due to its unique mission got popular among all of the unions. Due to unique behavior of TULF it steadily emerged as a strong group which resulted into the fall of all the other groups. In 1983 a proper struggle for separate Tamils state started and got to peak. After that some of the gorillas and terrorists attacks were observed into the state which resulted into several deaths and IDPs (A war strange as fiction, 2000). This situation continued till 90s. The fund raising for the Tamil continued and they kept their game going on for some time period. Due to this funding the Tamils exploited the situation in the Sri Lanka. LTTE got some symptoms of extremism due to irrational behavior of government this resulted into a serious event like Wannu event. This changed the thinking of international community about them. One of the Magazines in Sri Lanka clearly states that:

“The international community is now closing ranks against the LTTE. It is no secret that certain section of international community earlier had an element of sympathy towards the LTTE which portrayed itself as the liberators of the Tamil people. But the latest events in Wannu have diminished the little faith they had in the LTTE that it could yet enter into a peaceful settlement with the government”. (Sunday Observer 2009).

The second major party involved in the conflict is the Sinhalese people. The Buddhist Sinhalese represent the majority in Sri Lanka. The support between Sinhalese is divided into two major parties, The United National Party (UN) and Sri Lanka freedom Party (SLFP) (Singer, 2007). The census shows that Sinhalese

are seventy percent (70%) of population in the state. Sinhalese are majority influential at the Sri Lankan government. Sinhalese due to their strength want to keep their government accordingly to keep themselves in power. “The Sinhalese believe that Sri Lanka is largely a Sinhali-Buddhist country and all other religious and linguistic groups are alien” (Hennayake, 1989: 4). (Pfaffenberger, 1981: 114-115).

Sinhalese keep their ethnicities at first priority level. This is because they consider themselves the ruling party and religion so, to keep their monopoly going on.

Objectives and Issues

The two parties that are vastly involved in the conflicting issues are Tamil and Sinhalese. The both parties want to protect their own interests and power in the region. The perspective of Tamils and Sinhalese people both are ingrained and deep rooted. These two ethnic people are in the region from a long time period and both are willing to settle their dispute as regard to their own vested interest while compensating nothing with the other party. The Sinhalese especially are more concerned about keeping their own cultural, ethnic and economic power in the state. Both the parties are concerned with the rhetoric issues. The violence in the region is continued from the day of independence in Sri Lanka. No sooner did the state came into existence after the colonial system of British, the deep rooted groups started political fights of the region.

The objectives of both the parties are different by nature and prospect. If we look back into the detail we will analyze that the status of these issues or objectives is keeping on changing especially in the case of the Tamils. The reason is that the Sinhalese never want Tamils to be in the Government. Tamils when started their political war against the Sinhalese they were of the view that there should be equal opportunities for the Tamils, so that they could be involved in the government services. The basic concern was to keep the Sri Lankan government aware of the issues of minorities especially the Tamils. The Tamils got some contracts with the government but due to heavy opposition from Sinhalese, government with drew all the obligations. This led the Tamils towards their extreme nature and they changed their objectives toward the achievement of a separate homeland within the state of Sri Lanka. This situation, largely occurred during the 1970s, saw the shift from federalist inclusion to separatism, or from status-quo maintaining to status-quo changing (Kearney, 1985: 905).

Socio-Economic Perspective

The policies of Sri Lankan government clearly showed the intentions of the societal contribution and involvement in this conflict. Sri Lanka is facing conflict concerning language, religion, employment and education. The Sinhalese majority wanted to control the state and society. The government was influenced by the

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majority rather looking into society's diversity. If we look into the literature we will find that the "divide and rule policy" of British has led a negative effect on allocations to the society. Similarly in the case of Sri Lanka the government always bends itself toward the majority people. As DeVotta, accomplishes that the "Sinhalese quest to make Sinhala the country's only official language was the genesis of post-independence ethnic polarization" (Devotta, 58).

The society comprises of many different people of different ethnicity and religion. As far as the religion varies the norms, values, living styles and standard of living also vary. If we look into all these perspectives it largely contributes into the formation of policies especially with regard to the government. In Sri Lanka it has always been an issue that there is nothing for the minorities.

The economic sector of the country faces the same problem as the societal aspect. The government provides the attractive jobs but these are in scarcity as far as Tamils are concerned. It means that there are not enough opportunities for the Tamils to get involved into the economic activities rigorously. The Tamils are given some opportunities only in north part of the country, whereas for the rest of the country due to majority of Sinhalese there is not at least chance for them to get into the economic sector. This results into an inefficient allocation of resources. An inefficient allocation of resources always leads to an imbalanced economy. So, there is a sheer need to combat the socio-economic problems.

The Contradictory Aspects

"The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam lacked many of the characteristics of a party leading a liberation movement; it instead had several attributes of a terrorist organization. But the people in North-East of Sri Lanka have little faith that the victorious Sri Lankan government will implement a political package that will address the grievances of the Tamils." (North East Sri Lanka, 2009: 22).

LTTE as an organization involved into many terrorist activities as a correspondent describes that "There were several people from other organizations who gave their lives in the fight for the rights in Sri Lanka. (The LTTE murders many of them). The LTTE dismissed them as traitors for the only reason that they did not belong to their movement and asked the people to revere only the dead LTTE cadres as 'Great Heroes'". (North East Sri Lanka, 2009: 22). LTTE from past few decades were involved into their missions and to accomplish these objectives they were certainly involved into some very extreme activities like Ruthless killing, cold blooded murder and gorilla fight. "It (LTTE) froze in fear all groups of people-politicians, intellectuals, businessmen and ordinary people". (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1988)

Conclusion

Sri Lanka soon after its independence got into a severe internal issues relevant to state based on politics of ethnicity that exploited the situation of minorities. There

have been many a practices to take into consideration that exploited these issues. All efforts proved fruitless. It was felt later on that there is a need to formulate a proper strategy involving all the citizens and Government to tackle the situation with a rational approach. The real stakeholders are the people and the government. A strategy was formulated to deal with the menace. Consolidated efforts were made and success achieved ultimately. In this war about 70 thousand people were died. Now it is the right time for Sri Lankan government to resolve the problem and look into the demands of the Tamils. Though Sinhali majority, euphoric over the military success, are not taking care of and yield on the Tamil's demands. It would be a mistake to ignore Tamil because this can revive their resentment military struggle. Therefore, the Sri Lankan government should look into their problems, formulate a policy and spend money to resolve their problems to give a last touch of winning the war.

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