"Collective Fear" and Tamil Political Agitations in Post-independence Ceylon: A Historical Analysis

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පශ්චාත් නිදහස් සමයෙහි ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ද්‍රවිඩ දේශපාලනය පිළිබඳව අවධානය යොමු කිරීමේදී 1948-1970 අතර කාල පරාසය විසින් හිමිකරගනුයේ සුවිශේෂිත ස්ථානයකි. මේ අවධියේදී ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ද්‍රවිඩ දේශපාලනය එම සමාජයේ ආචීර්ණකල්පිතවාදී ප්‍රභූ පැළැන්තිය විසින් නියෝජනය කළේය. ඔවුහු ද්‍රවිඩ අයිතිවාසිකම් වෙනුවෙන් විවිධ ව්‍යාපාර දියත් කළ අතරම ද්‍රවිඩ සමාජය ජාතිවාදීව නඟා සිටුවීමට ද කටයුතු කළහ. මෙම පර්යේෂණය ඔස්සේ පශ්චාත් නිදහස් සමයෙහි ද්‍රවිඩ නායකයින් අතර විද්‍යාමාන වූ "පොදු බිය" සහ ඒ නිසාම හටගත් අනාරක්ෂිත හැඟීමුත් එම හැඟීම් වලින් පන ගැන්වී ඔවුන් දියත් කළ දේශපාලනික ව්‍යාපාරය පිළිබඳවත් අධ්‍යයනයට ලක් කෙරුණි. මෙම පර්යේෂණය ගුණාත්මක පර්යේෂණ ක්‍රමවේදය යටතේ ප්‍රාථමික හා ද්විතීය මූලාශ්‍ර ද්විත්වයම භාවිතාවට ගනිමින් සිදු කෙරුණි. එහිදී විවිධ පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් රචනා කරන ලද පොත් පත් ද්විතීය මූලාශ්‍ර ගනයෙහිලා පරිශීලනය කළ අතර සමකාලීන ලිපි ලේඛන ප්‍රාථමික මූලාශ්‍ර වශයෙන් භාවිතාවට ගැනුණි. මෙම පර්යේෂණය තුළින්, පශ්චාත් නිදහස් සමයෙහි මෙරට සමාජ, ආර්ථික හා දේශපාලනික ක්ෂේත්‍රවල වර්ධනය වූ සිංහල බහුතර නියෝජනය, ද්‍රවිඩ නායකයින් තුළ "පොදු බිය" මූල් කරගත් අනාරක්ෂිත හැඟීම් ඇති වීමට ඉවහල් වූ බව අවබෝධ කර ගැනුණි. භෞතික වශයෙන් ඇති වූ අපහසුතාවයන්ටත් වඩා මානසිකව ඔවුන් තුළ ඇති වූ මෙම අනාරක්ෂිත තත්වය වඩාත් බලවත් වූ අතර ඒ නිසාම ඔවුහු තම පැවැත්ම ආරක්ෂා කර ගැනීම සඳහා මෙරට සමාජ, ආර්ථික, දේශපාලනික ව්‍යුහය තුළ සමාන අයිතිවාසිකම් ඉල්ලා සිටිමින්, සාමාන්‍ය ද්‍රවිඩ ජනතාව ජාතිවාදීව පනගන්වමින් පශ්චාත් නිදහස් සමය පුරාම විවිධ ව්‍යාපාර දියත් කළහ.

මුඛ්‍යපද : බිය, අනාරක්ෂිත භාවය, සිංහල බහුතර බලය, ද්‍රවිඩ නායකයින්

1.   Introduction

Up to the 1920s, Sinhala and Tamil politicians had unitedly conducted political agitations demanding greater rights from the British colonial ruling power. However, from the 1920s this situation changed and disagreements began to emerge between the Sinhala and Tamil leaders regarding the issues of constitutional implementations and power sharing in the Legislative Assembly. During the post-independence period those disagreements rose to a new level. After getting independence in 1948, Ceylon was ruled by majority Sinhalese governments. In this situation, elite Tamil politicians began agitating against the successive national governments demanding "equal opportunities" and began mobilizing the common Tamil society to join the protests by fomenting Tamil nationalism and arousing hostile feelings against the majority Sinhalese.

2.   Literature Review

Various researchers have investigated the reasons and causes behind the politics of the elite Tamils during the post-independence period. As pointed out by Roberts (2009), Little (1994), Wickremasinghe (1996), Bond (1988), Tambiah (1992) and Uyangoda (1996), Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and its related agendas displeased the Tamil elites greatly, prompting them to act against the successive governments during the post-independence period. Likewise, De Silva (1988), Devotta (2007), Johnson (1993), Obeysekara (1984) and Kerney (1978)) have observed that the language issues and religious issues have played an important part in post-independence Tamil politics. Some observers have pointed out that although Tamil nationalism originally commenced as a reaction against western influences, later it was used to resist the Buddhist revival movement, which began after Sri Lanka gained independence. The Tamil Nationalist movement later developed into an anti-Sinhala movement that aimed to achieve equal rights under the Sinhalese dominated regime (Wilson, 2000; Tambiah, 1986; Gunasingham, 1999; Sivarajah, 1996; Swamy, 1996; Harris, 2001). Nissan perceived this as follows – 'what began as a series of claims by both Tamils and Sinhalese against the British was transformed into claims directed against each other' (Nissan, 1990, p. 34). According to some commentators, the most significant factors in the post-independence politics of Sri Lanka proved to be myths and history (Gunasingham, 1999; Dharmadasa, 1988; Devotta, 2007; Renan, 1996; De Silva, 1985). As one writer noted, 'Sinhala history justifies their claim to impose their rule over the whole Island of Lanka. For Tamils too history is used to justify their demands for a degree of autonomy for the Tamil dominated areas, and today for total separation from the Sinhala dominated parts of the country' (Nissan, 1990, p. 19). A number of recent studies (Abeyrathna, 2002; Ebuldeniya, 2013; Perera, 2001; Shanmugaratnam & Stokke, 2004; Kelegama, 2000; Richardson & Samarasinghe, 1991; Nithiyanandan, 1987) on the post-independence situation have explored the underlying causes of the festering conflict and attributed it to the presence

of inequalities in accessing political power and economic resources. They have listed a number of disparities that are likely to have aroused feelings of discontent and frustration, which may have eventually caused a truculent group to mobilize and enter into a conflict along ethnic lines.

Even though a number of viewpoints have been expressed regarding the Tamil political agitations in post-independence Ceylon, it is difficult to identify "Collective fear" as one of the reasons behind the attitude of the elite Tamil leaders. In order to clarify that point this research is mainly focused on examining whether there was a sense of collective fear based on feelings of insecurity among the Tamil elites during the post-independence period of Ceylon. Also, this research will analyze whether the influence of insecurity based collective fear among the Tamil elites motivated them to conduct political agitation movements and group mobilizations along ethnic lines during the particular period.

David Lake and Donald Rothschild have claimed in their study "Rational Explanation" that collective fear plays a decisive role in ethnic conflicts. That is, when an ethnic group has apprehensions regarding its safety and security it adopts a defensive stance, which in turn leads it to become aggressive and belligerent and possibly resort to violence. According to the authors, ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs operating within the groups build upon these worries about insecurity and polarize society, aggravating the conflict. Political grievances and other resentments additionally magnify these anxieties, driving the parties to the conflict further apart. Together, these between groups' and within groups' strategic interactions engender a toxic brew of distrust and suspicion that can explode into mindless violence (Lake & Rothschild, 1996, pp. 41–42).

3. Methodology

This research incorporates data from both primary and secondary sources. Contemporary documents such as Hansards, newspapers and various promulgated acts were used as the primary sources. Secondary sources like documents and news reports published in local and international newspapers and websites also provided a vast amount of data about Sri Lankan Tamil politics. Other sources like books, research papers, monographs and theses too served as secondary data. As this research is of a qualitative nature, content analysis method was used on the data. In order to proceed with that, as the first step of the data analysis process all the collected data were coded. Secondly, all the data collected were categorized based on the main research aims and questions. In order to do that effectively, numerous details that were not directly related to the main research aims were omitted. Also, when partial viewpoints and incomplete information that might prove less reliable were received, contemporary records and materials were used to cross-check and extract the reliable information during the analysis stage. In the end it was possible to arrive at certain plausible conclusions by comparing all the related details with one another.

4.   Discussion

4.1   Status enjoyed by elite Tamils before Ceylon gained independence

As the colonial rulers and missionary organizations established some really good English schools in Jaffna peninsula, the high caste Tamils were able to receive an excellent education even during the colonial period. Further, because of the "Divide and Rule" policy practiced by the colonial rulers, they received favorable treatment compared to the Sinhalese.[1] As a result of that, during the colonial period they were able to access the best educational resources, professions and political representation. This enabled them to maintain themselves at a higher social level (Tambiah, 1986; Spencer, 1990; Bandarage, 2009). High caste Tamils were able to stay in the forefront, ahead of the Sinhala leaders in the political agitation movement in the colonial period (Wickremasinghe, 1995, p. 25). In those times Tamils were not regarded as a minority community either by others or even by themselves; rather, they were on a par with the majority Sinhalese community (De Silva, 1967, p. 90).

4.2   Heightened feelings of fear and insecurity among the Tamil elites in the post-independence period

Beginning from the 1930s the British rulers began applying democratic principles to the socio-political setup of Ceylon. This enabled the majority Sinhalese leaders to gradually establish their power in the political setup of Ceylon, in keeping with their numerical strength. During the post-independence period Sinhalese dominancy was further established. In the post-independence era, more democratic principles were established, various social welfare policies were implemented and new constitutional amendments made by the governments. Most of those changes enabled the Sinhalese to establish themselves in much stronger positions in the socio-political and economic fields; at the same time, the over-representation of high caste Tamils in all of those fields gradually decreased. Sinhala Buddhists viewed the post-independence changes as a process that helped them to regain the "right place" in national life. On the other hand, Tamil leaders perceived the Sinhala Buddhist dominancy as a threat to their socio-economic, political and cultural survival. Thus, they had begun to feel insecure and emotions such as "fear", "threat" and "hate" began to overcome them. Such emotional feelings worked as a "switch" that was the motivation for action.

In the post-independence period several "colonization" programs, i.e. state sponsored land resettlement programs were introduced by the Ceylon government. To implement this

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1   British rulers implemented their infamous "divide and rule" policy as a strategy to divide the different ethnicities of Sri Lanka. Through this method, they practiced favoritism by offering various benefits to the minority Tamils to set them apart from the majority Sinhalese. In that manner, they aroused feelings of envy and resentment among the majority Sinhalese over Tamils.

policy, the government launched a series of resettlement projects that involved selecting Sinhala people from the overcrowded southern areas and the hill country of the Island and shifting them to new settlements in the dry zone. According to Manogaran (1987), during the period 1953–1981, 165,000 Sinhalese were added to the population of the Eastern and Northern provinces.

These colonization projects had the direct effect of increasing the fear among Tamil politicians. Particularly, they feared about the future demographic status of those geographical areas where the colonization projects were being carried out. S.J.V. Chelvanayakam[2] complained that the Tamil composition of parliament had been reduced directly as a result of the colonization projects (HC. Deb, 17 June, 1957). The proposed settlement programs mainly focused on the peripheral regions of the Northern and Eastern provinces, which had been predominantly inhabited by Tamils until then. Therefore, at the very outset Tamil leaders strongly criticized this program[3]. According to them, those provinces comprised the "Traditional Homelands" of the Tamils. Particularly, the FP frequently reminded the Tamils of the fact that there had been an independent Tamil Kingdom in the North before the arrival of the Portuguese (Sivarajah, 1996, p. 107). A.J. Wilson declared that "the colonization schemes were deliberately interposed so as to break up the geographical contiguity of the two Tamil provinces" (Wilson, 1984, p. 159). When there was an increase in Sinhalese representation in the peripheral areas of the Northern and Eastern provinces, Tamils were overcome by feelings of insecurity. They believed that through these projects the Sinhalese people would receive most of the economic benefits of those areas. Consequently, they feared about the future status of those regions. While the Tamils were in an emotionally worried state the FP manipulated those feelings in order to mobilize the Tamils against Sinhalese dominance.

Even though Tamil leaders identified the colonization scheme as an anti-Tamil program, it is important to assess this project in an impartial manner. It should be pointed out to the Tamil leaders who charge that Sinhalese people would obtain economic benefits from those areas that a large number of Tamils had been living and continue to live in Colombo and many other areas amidst Sinhalese people. They owned agricultural lands, ran businesses and worked in government institutions in those areas. Sinhalese people had maintained friendly relations with the Tamils in Sinhala areas over hundreds of years and

2   S.J.V. Chelvanayakam was one of the prominent Tamil leaders of the time. Under his leadership a new Tamil political party named ''Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi'' (ITAK), which stood for Sri Lanka Tamil State Party, was formed in 1949. This party was established primarily with the objective of working towards a federal political structure with regional autonomy for the Tamils (De Silva, 1988b, p. 153). Later on, this name was changed to Federal Party (FP). For more than a quarter of a century, Chelvanayakam and the FP represented the ideology of federalism, regional autonomy and separatism for the North and East.
3   S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, presidential address delivered at the inaugural and first meeting of the Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi on 18th December 1949 (ITAK, 1951, P. 1).

co-existed peacefully with them. Other than this Kanagasundram[4] (2017), a UK educated Tamil person when speaking of colonization noted that "D. S.[5] was pro-Sinhala not anti-Tamil." As pointed out by Bandarage (2009), "As the First Prime Minister, he felt obliged to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country in the face of rising Tamil separatism. He wanted to settle Sinhalese in Trincomalee and the hinterland in Padaviya and Seruwila in the North, and Ampara in the East, to block a contiguous and homogeneous Tamil speaking area in the North and the East" (p. 48). Other than this in the concurrent period there was a significant growth in the population of the country while poverty related grievances had increased among Sinhalese peasants. During the period 1946–1953 the Ceylon population increased 2.8 percent (Department of Census & Statistics, 1986). Also, the landless population had increased to 26 percent among all agricultural families (Attanayake, 2001, p. 76). As pointed out by Kanagasundram (2017), during this period many peasants of Kandy and Kegalle suffered endemic land hunger. He further pointed out that "D.S. Senanayake's vision to settle the dry zone with Sinhala colonists from the Kandyan areas, provide them with cleared land, irrigation and housing, was to redress to some extent the historical injustice done to them when the British expropriated their ancestral lands – especially after the Kandyan revolt of 1848 (under the infamous Waste Lands Ordinance). The British then cleared the land and cultivated coffee and tea by employing alien Indian Tamil laborers. This was the first "ethnic cleansing" in Sri Lanka. It should also be mentioned that the lands that were colonized under the scheme were uninhabited jungle areas and not a single Tamil farmer was displaced. Therefore, it is better to acknowledge that the colonization project entered mainstream politics due to the contemporary requirements of the society. However, the FP based elite politicians used this issue to stir up Tamil nationalism and propagate anti-Sinhalese ideology within Tamil society.

Though the colonization projects had given rise to sharp ethnic tensions among Tamils, the language issue was an even more contentious matter that generated a great deal of fear among the Tamils by giving rise to feelings of insecurity. Many liberal policies like the free education system and expansion of education opportunities were introduced by the British even before independence. Therefore, children from rural areas were also able to receive the benefits of education. But most of this education was conducted in the vernacular languages. Due to that reason the majority of those who passed out of schools and universities did not have enough opportunities to enter any of the distinguished professions, as the official language of Ceylon was English, even after independence. By the time of independence, the English educated local elite groups made up only 7% of the total population of the Island. 58.9% of the population spoke only Sinhala language in 1953 (Department of Census and Statistics, 1953).

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4   Ajit Kanagasundram is the son of K. Kanagasundram who worked as chairman of the Gal Oya scheme in1950. Therefore, Ajit Kanagasundram has extensive knowledge about the colonization scheme.

5   The first colonization projects were introduced during the tenure of Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake.

Therefore, even from the colonial period, there had been strong tendencies towards empowering the vernacular educated population. Most significant influences working for this change were visible on the Sinhalese side rather than the Tamil side. Tamils were not enthusiastic about vernacular education in the 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. But after independence this situation changed. Sinhala Buddhist agitators strongly urged that Sinhala should be made the official language by displacing English (Seelavamsa, 1954; Premadasa, 1955). Other than this, as pointed out above, in the post-independence language movement the Sinhalese side was motivated more by economic factors than cultural issues. When the Sinhalese tried to get access to government professions they felt discouraged and were eliminated from the process as the official language was English. Also, the Sinhalese realized that even though they outnumbered the Tamils by a ratio of six to one, "the select Ceylon Civil Service had twice as many Tamils as Sinhalese in 1946. Even in 1962, over 40 percent of the Government Medical Service doctors were Tamil" (Bandarage, 2009, p. 43).

Western educated, Sinhala aristocratic leader S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike assumed office as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 1956. Soon after that he introduced the Official Language Act, no. 33 of 1956, which made Sinhala the only official language of Ceylon. The main influential factor that forced the Prime Minister to implement this measure was the agitation of Sinhalese nationalists. The passing of the official language bill marked the beginning of a new phase of Tamil politics. Tamil leaders claimed that the Sinhala language legislation would bring in an era of "apartheid" with the Sinhalese as the "masters and rulers" and Tamils being forced to accept "subject status under them" (Ibid, p. 45). Tamil leaders saw that making Sinhalese the sole official language would put Tamils in a subordinate position and no doubt give the Sinhalese speaking people a competitive advantage in entrance to the public service, law, education and other coveted careers. Therefore, the high caste elites realized that this act would prevent them from accessing the prominent positions that they had hitherto held in the professional field since the colonial times (Wickremasinghe, 2006, p. 271).

The use of Sinhala as the official language resulted in a significant decrease in the privileges the high caste Tamils enjoyed in the educational and professional sectors of Sri Lanka. The Federal Party manipulated the common Tamil society by propagating anti-Sinhalese sentiments by exploiting the language issue. Tamils were aggressively engaging in various protest activities as a result of being instigated by these emotion arousing messages. Numerous acts of sabotage against government property took place in the Northern and Eastern provinces. Large numbers of Tamil people gathered in Hindu Temples in the Northern and Eastern provinces and engaged in prayers seeking divine intervention against the "Sinhala Only" legislation. The contemporary newspapers reported a number of incidents of ethnic disturbances that occurred because of this issue. For example, the FP under

Chelvanayakam's leadership had staged a peaceful *Satyagraha* (protest demonstration) against the "Sinhala Only" bill at Galle Face Green in Colombo on the 6th of June 1956. During this protest, a number of Sinhalese thugs pounced upon them shouting "Don't use Tamil." On this occasion some Tamil leaders were also injured as a result of Sinhala extremists' angry reactions (Anon, 1956). Violent ethnic riots quickly flared up across the country. Both communities engaged in hostile activities against each other. Gal Oya and Ampara areas witnessed some disturbing scenes in this regard because both Tamil and Sinhala people were closely settled in those areas.

This unstable situation was effectively used by the FP to mobilize the Tamils against the Ceylon Government. In February, 1957 they organized a *Hartal* against the "Sinhala Only" bill and the Citizenship Acts. On this occasion printed copies of both Acts were burnt while playing mournful music (Anon, 1957a). They followed up in parliament by engaging in strong debates to protect Tamil rights. One member of the FP, Mr. Navarathnam stated 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" (HC. Deb, June 1957, p. 209).

At the end of the 1950s the government implemented the policy of using the Sinhala "Sri" symbol for a certain purpose. According to this policy the Sinhala letter "Sri" was to be displayed on vehicle license plates issued after a certain date. Though the Sinhalese people accepted this policy, the Tamils were deeply offended. According to them their dignity and self-respect were directly challenged by this policy. The FP organized a mass civil disobedience campaign across the Northern and Eastern provinces. They published a common statement advising the Tamil people that they should use only the Tamil "Sri" symbol for their vehicles (Anon., 1957b). With the encouragement of the FP, Tamil people in the Northern and Eastern provinces obstructed vehicles with the Sinhala "Sri" number plates from entering those regions (Anon., 1957b). As reported in the Dinamina newspaper, sometimes even Sinhala government ministers were not allowed to enter the Northern Province due to Tamil opposition (Anon., 1957b). The increasing intensity of the anti-Sri campaign in the North led to a counter response against Tamil lettering on street signs and name boards in the Sinhala areas, especially in Colombo (DeVotta, 2004, pp. 110–111). The horrific "race riots" that broke out in 1958 were the ultimate result of these actions. Sinhalese and Tamils were both aggressors and victims (Bandarage, 2009, p. 50). Between 500 and 600 human lives were lost due to this communal violence. The political situation in Ceylon had been following a path that led to the drastic growth of interactive ethno-nationalism.

Successive Sinhala government(s) moved to allay the fears of the Tamil community by introducing various acts and pacts. For example, the Bandaranaike–Chelvanayakam pact of 1958, Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958, Chelvanayakam–Senanayake pact of 1965, etc. But none of these initiatives succeeded under the virulent protests of Sinhala

political and non-political groups (Anon., 1966). As pointed out, the "Collective Fear" theory of ethnic conflict contains "safeguards" to ensure that each side will live up to its commitments and feel secure in the knowledge that the other side will do so as well (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 49). As none of these agreements was implemented even partially, Tamil politicians began to perceive that the government was biased in favor of the majority and alienating the minority.

After implementing the "Sinhala Only" policy, Sinhala government(s) moved to expand social welfare distributions further. In the 1960s, the Ceylonese people had achieved high rates of literacy as a result of the free education system that was introduced in the 1940s. Similarly, the government endeavored to develop the Ceylonese education system by establishing new primary and secondary schools even in rural areas. A few new universities were also established. The medium of education was the vernacular language, Sinhala or Tamil. Therefore, the majority Sinhalese who were discriminated against during colonial rule reaped the maximum benefits in the educational field. The number of educated Sinhala rural youth rapidly increased. As mentioned previously, education based on the vernacular medium was not received well by the colonial rulers. Only the elite class community received English language based education, which enabled them to enter the distinguished professions. As mentioned earlier, the Tamil participation was most significant in this area when compared with the Sinhalese. However, after this Act the prevailing situation clearly changed. In keeping with the "Sinhala Only" Act, the working medium of the entire government administration was changed from English to Sinhala.

Tamil representation gradually dwindled in the government service due to the language barrier as most Tamils were not proficient in Sinhala. Kerney (1975, pp. 49–50) 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." At the same time, the country's state sector became gradually politicized beginning from the 1960s. According to this practice, ruling party politicians selected and recommended cadres when staff had to be recruited to fill vacancies in government ministries, departments and other institutions. This was a practice under which the posts in government run bodies were filled on the basis of political patronage. The absence of Tamil politicians in the government after 1956 placed the Tamil youth seeking state sector employment in a most disadvantageous position (Samaranayaka, 1991, p. 154). Gunasinghe (1984, p. 199) states thus – irrespective of whether the regime was United National Party or Sri Lanka Freedom Party, opportunities existed for Sinhala youth to build up patron–client linkages with local politicians and press themselves forward. The Tamil youth, especially those from the North and the East, did not enjoy this advantage, as their local politicians represented only the regional ethnic parties, and did not have any power at the center.-

When the Tamil representation decreased in the socio-economic and other fields in the post-independence period, the Tamils lost faith in the ability and the will of successive Ceylon government(s) to protect the Tamils and their interests. They were deeply worried about their future. This situation increased the frustration and disappointment among the Tamil community. Chelvanayakam pointed out that even some small minorities like the Indian Tamils and Muslims receive privileges under a democratic parliamentary system, whereas the Jaffna Tamils were unable to maintain their previously existing dominant position. Therefore, "They wished to establish themselves as a majority and this could only be done through partitioning and the establishment of a brand new nation state" (Richter, 1998, p. 110). However, it is important to mention here that the Ceylon Tamil composition of the Island in 1953 was also 10.93 percent of the total. It is also not a high percentage when compared with some other minorities.[6]

Horowitz argues that the psychological power of emotional driving forces is more vigorous than any economic, linguistic or other motivating factors. At this point, Horowitz explains that in addition to the contest for dominance, fear of group extinction is also a powerful motivation for engaging in ethnic war. In that manner he argues that this fear of extinction is transformed into hostile feelings, which finally lead to violent expression by conflicted groups (Horowitz, 1985). While analyzing the former Yugoslavian situation Professor Vesna Pesic noted that ethnic conflict is caused by the "fear of the future, lived through the past" (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, p. 43). Therefore, it is easy to understand why by the end of the 1960s the Tamil community was also on the brink of conflict. It was because of their downfall from the previous position so that they felt a lack of security regarding their future.

5. Findings and Conclusions

During the colonial period elite class Tamils in Ceylon enjoyed a high socio-economic and political status that was disproportionately high when compared with the Tamil representation in the total population. However, during the post-independence period under a more democratic political setup, majority Sinhalese naturally established themselves in stronger positions in all the socio-economic fields. Concurrently, Tamil representation and the associated privileges enjoyed by them gradually decreased in the national arena. After being reduced from their previous enviable position the elite Tamil politicians became highly frustrated and began to suffer feelings of insecurity. They started to worry about their future position in the country. Being cornered in a weak position they reacted angrily and manipulated the feelings of the general Tamil society against the country's government and the majority Sinhalese population along ethnic lines. Therefore, at the end of the 1960s an environment with a potential for conflict was

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6   The percentage of Indian Tamils in 1953 was 12.03 (Department of Census & Statistics, 1953).

created within the Tamil community, with the target being the majority community. This laid the background conditions for group mobilization based on psychological persuasion, which emphasized the weak and disadvantaged position into which the Tamils had been pushed in the socio-economic and political spheres. The majority Sinhalese were blamed for this state of affairs, giving rise to a rebellious environment in the 1970s within the Tamil community. The psychological sense of deprivation suffered by Tamils during this period was mainly caused by feelings of fear and insecurity regarding what they perceived would be their diminished status in future.

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