

THE LIONS AND TIGERS



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Religious & Cultural Background of the Sinhala - Tamil Relations

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This book is dedicated to
my mother, Podimenike
in memory of the first
anniversary of her death.

FOREWORD

This book is not just a plea for harmony between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka-it is a revelation of the deep cultural ties that have existed between the two communities over the centuries.

As Professor Anuradha Seneviratna's research so clearly documents, the conflict between the two communities is not one of 'racial' or ethnic' hatred, despite what some today might say. In fact, the historical relations between Tamils and Sinhalese cannot be easily categorised. When convenient, Sinhala kings employed Tamil soldiers and made alliances with Tamil kingdoms, especially to protect themselves against invasions from Indian kings, (notably from the Kalinga) or from Europeans. For their part, Tamil kings, especially the Pandiyans at times made alliances with Sinhalese kings against other Tamil kings. Seizing the advantage of a power vacuum, the Colas did invade Sri Lanka, but at other times Sinhala Buddhists sought refuge in South India from the depredation of their own brothers.

Careful reading of this booklet will teach both Tamils and Sinhalese new things. If Tamils are unaware that they are viewed not as a 'minority' but as representative of a powerful cultural force of 70 million Tamils a few miles away, perhaps Sinhalese are not always informed about the depth of the interaction between Sri Lanka and South India. Certainly in these few pages, we find many manifestations of mixing between South Indian and Sri Lankan culture. Buddhist stupas, for instance, show the influence of Andhra models and Sinhala kingship terms are close to those in Tamil. Even the Sinhala script, as it evolved from the 7th century AD, is indebted to the Pallava Grantha script. Perhaps most surprising to those of us who have not studied these relations, is that the illustrious scholar Buddhaghosa was a Telugu and that several other important figures in the history of Sri Lanka were of Tamil or Telugu origin.

Several years ago Prof. Obeyesekere of Princeton University wrote a book demonstrating how the cult of Pattini illustrates the Sinhala-Tamil, Buddhist-Hindu mixture beneath the surface of Sri Lankan culture. Similarly, from the work of others, we know that the terminology and aesthetics in less well-known ritual traditions, especially those involving spirit possession, also show a close relationship with rituals in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Many more examples could be cited, but the point is that only when more research on historical and contemporary cultural traditions on both sides of the Palk Strait is published, will we learn the full extent and complexity of the Sinhala-Tamil cultural interaction.

Professor Seneviratna has opened a way forward for more scholars to pursue this path of truth. We can only hope that truth leads towards peace.

DR. STUART BLACKBURN
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London. Nov. 1999.



INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the outcome of a lecture delivered by me on the Religious and Cultural Relations between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka from historical times. This lecture was organised by the Centre of South Asian Studies of the University of London. I am grateful to Dr. Stuart Blackburn, the Chairman of the Centre for his kind invitation to me to address the seminar. However, after accepting the invitation, I ran into a problem when someone reported to the Sri Lanka High Commission in London that I was going to address a seminar about 'Tigers'. When the officials inquired from me, I said whether it was true or not, I should be left alone to do my independent academic research for, I am not a politician. The reason for their fear was the title that I was using for the seminar - The Lions and Tigers. I told them that I was not only speaking about the Tigers but also about the Lions. This is also the reason why an important theme like the Sinhala-Tamil relations should not be left in the hands of the politicians alone but also in the hands of academics and others interested in finding a solution to the present problem. I therefore like to thank the Centre of South Asian Studies for giving me an opportunity to address my mind in public with regard to a very sensitive issue in my country. I feel happy that I was able to talk to a mixed audience with the presence of the Sinhalese, Tamils and the Europeans participating with confidence and freedom of expression in a true academic atmosphere.

As the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad said: Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya
-take us from darkness to the light.

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24th November 1999.



The Lions and Tigers **Religious & Cultural Background of the Sinhala -** **Tamil Relations**

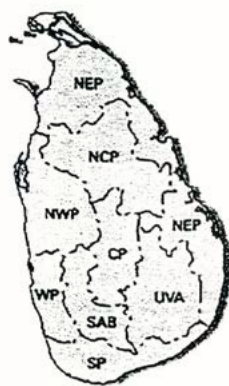
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Venerable Dr. Walpola Rahula, one of the leading Theravada Buddhist scholar monks of this century said that the crisis between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka cannot be rationally identified as an ethnic problem. Great civilisations of the past were admired for their heritage and culture. The Sri Lankan heritage of the past has been essentially Sinhala-Buddhist. Hence calling the Sinhalese who admire their heritage as racist is rather parochial. The same critics would not stigmatise other nations for being proud of their past heritage. Minority ethnic groups living among nations with great cultural heritages naturally feel neglected when they fail to see that cultural differences can be accommodated without losing their identity. Such accommodations can avoid violent conflicts.

On a regional basis, the Sinhala people living on Sri Lanka are a minority when compared to the massive population of 60 million Tamils who live in Tamil Nadu in South India, a few miles across the sea. The Tamil community in Sri Lanka is numerically a fraction of the Tamil communities who had migrated from India to various parts of the world at different times. In the light of this situation one cannot consider Sri Lankan Tamils as a minority group



	Population (000's, 1994)	Main ethnic groups (1981)
SRI LANKA	17,865	74% Sinhalese 13% Ceylon Tamil 7% Muslim, 6% Up-country Tamil
Western Province (WP) (Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara)	4,599	85% Sinhalese 6% Muslim, 6% Ceylon Tamil
Northeastern Province (NEP) (Jaffna, Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mannar, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi)	2,645	65% Ceylon Tamil 18% Muslim, 13% Sinhalese
Southern Province (SP) (Galle, Matara, Hambantota)	2,330	95% Sinhalese
Central Province (CP) (Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya)	2,261	64% Sinhalese 20% Up-country Tamil 8% Ceylon Tamil, 7% Muslim
Northwestern Province (NWP) (Kurunegala, Puttalam)	2,107	90% Sinhalese 7% Muslim
Sabaragamuwa (SAB) (Ratnapura, Kegalle)	1,735	87% Sinhalese 9% Up-country Tamil
Uva Province (UVA) (Badulla, Monaragala)	1,102	76% Sinhalese 16% Up-country Tamil 5% Ceylon Tamil
Northcentral Province (NCP) (Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa)	1,086	91% Sinhalese 7% Muslim

threatened with extinction. On the contrary the Sinhala are a nation, which face extinction due to Tamil expansion.

Population wise Sri Lanka has 18.2 million people living in the island. According to the ethnic distribution the Sinhalese are the majority comprising nearly 75 percent. Next come the Sri Lankan Tamils comprising 12 percent with an addition of another 5 percent Indian Tamils working in the plantation sector. The Moors are 7 percent. According to the religious distribution Buddhists are again in the majority comprising nearly 70 percent of the population. Hindus are 15 percent. Muslims and Christians 7 percent each. Therefore one could say that Sri Lanka is essentially a country of Sinhala-Buddhist identity.

Both in India as well as in Sri Lanka people have been racially grouped into Aryan and Dravidian.

The majority of the North Indians are being recognised as Aryan while people in South India are generally called Dravidian. In the same way the Sinhala in the South are called Aryan while the Tamils in the North are called Dravidian. However this cannot be regarded as a scholarly classification as the terms Aryan as well as Dravidian connote linguistic groups.

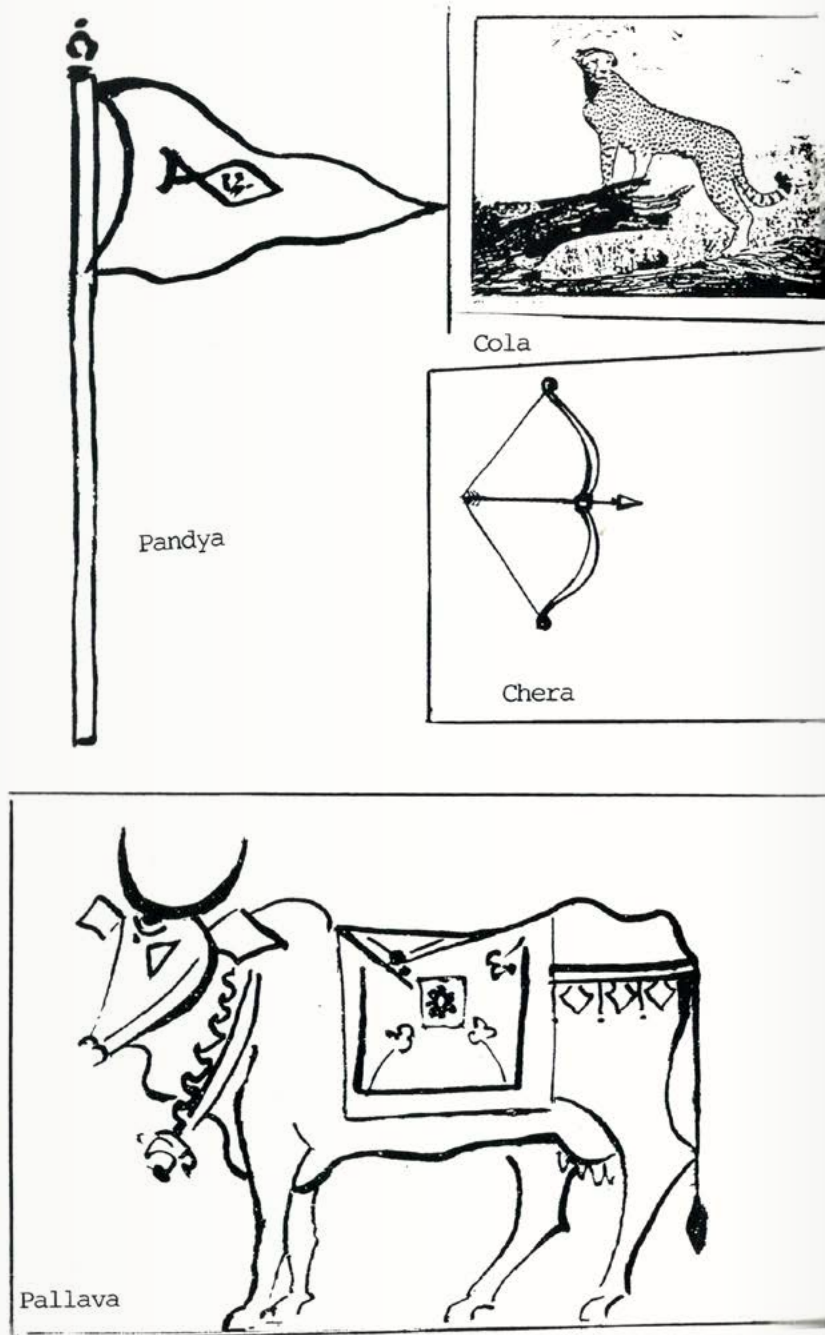
In defining a nation several characteristic features are taken into consideration. A nation should possess a history of stable and unbroken development which can be traced in written records and such a nation should have territorial integrity and a way of life which characterises its culture with a language of its own. Thus, language becomes a crucial and determining factor in defining the national identity of a nation apart from its culture. A nation is often identified by its



language. Thus one cannot avoid calling Sri Lanka the country of the Sinhala (*Sinhaladvīpa* or *Ceylon*) in the same way Germany is named after the language which most of its inhabitants speak. This is true of Portugal, Greece and China where the names of these countries stand for their respective languages. Thus language invariably becomes a defining feature of a nation. Hence it is natural for Sri Lanka to be associated with the language of its major linguistic group, the Sinhala.

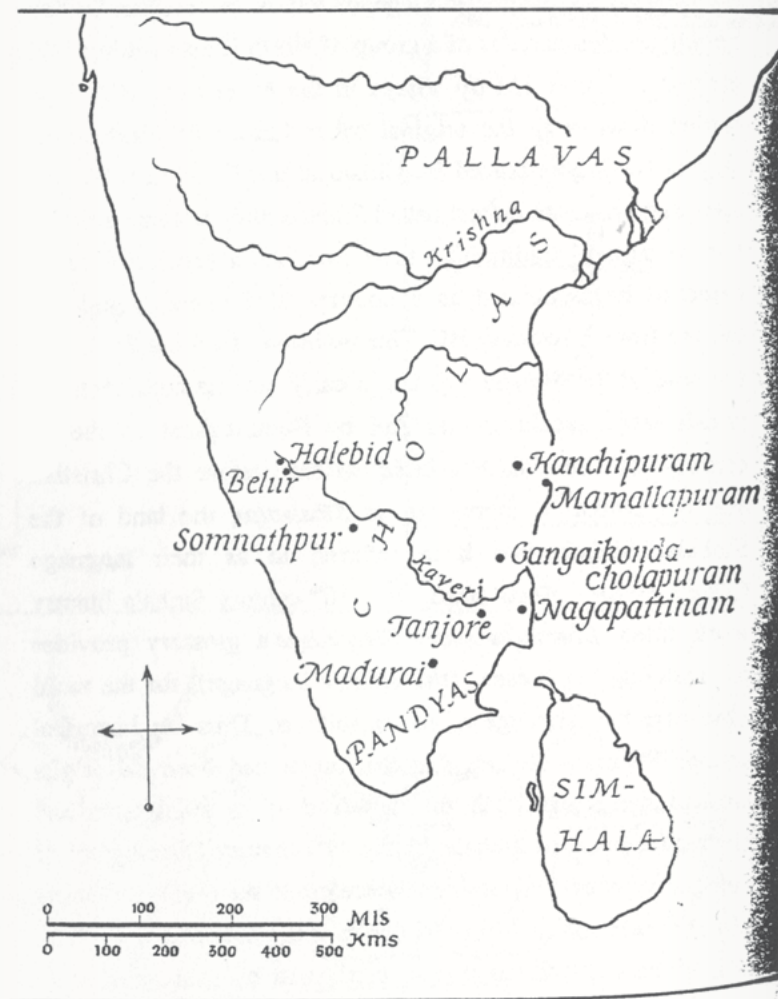
The early Aryan colonisers in Sri Lanka were called *Sinhala* (Pali – *Sīhala*) because they were people who had the lion as the emblem of their race. The Tamils who were Colas had the tiger as their symbol. This explains the use of Lion and Tiger as symbols of Sinhala and Tamil people. The original myths associated with those two races are well known.

While the Colas adopted the Tiger as their national symbol, the Pandyas had the Fish as theirs. The Pallavas adopted the Bull symbol and the Cheras the Bow. To many ethnologists the Pandians, Pallavas and the Cheras were non-Dravidians by ethnicity. They are believed to have migrated to the south either from the north or elsewhere at a remote period in history that scholars have been unable to determine precisely. However, having migrated south, they adopted Dravidian as the language of communication. This is a consequence of living in South India for centuries and coming under Cola domination after the 10th century. Subsequently Colas, Pandyas and Pallavas became one nationality, giving up their formal identities, and formed the Tamil Nadu as a distinct linguistic and ethnic area. Similarly, in Sri Lanka the Arab Muslims who arrived on the eastern coast for trade with South



India adopted Tamil as the language of communication and settled down in the eastern province, making the Tamil speaking area much bigger and exacerbating the present political problem. Thus parallels can be drawn between the two countries.

As the history and legends tell us, the present Sinhala people are descendants of a group of North Indian settlers who arrived in Lanka led by Vijaya in the 6th century BC. They settled down with the original tribes known as Yakkas and Nagas. Having embraced Buddhism in the 3rd century BC and speaking an Aryan dialect called Sinhala, they became a nation with a cultural tradition of their own. As a result Sri Lanka came to be associated as a country of Sinhala - Buddhist culture from 3rd century BC. This tradition of calling Sri Lanka the land of the Sinhala appears in early Sinhala commentaries which were translated into Pali by Buddhaghosa in the 5th century AD. In *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*, written before the Christian era, Sri Lanka is referred to as *Sīhaladīpa*, the land of the Sinhala. Sinhala had been referred to as their language (*Sīhala dīpaṃ - Sīhala bhāsa*). In a 10th century Sinhala literary work titled *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gāṭapadaya* a glossary provides the meaning 'hela basa' (the Sinhala language), for the word *dīpa bāsa* the language of its inhabitants. Thus the historical sources strongly suggest that Sri Lanka had been called the land of the Sinhala and the language of its inhabitants had always been called Sinhala. In the 12th century Gurulugomi in his literary work *Dharmapradīpikā* refers to the mythical legend of *Sinhabāhu* and says that Sri Lanka is the land of the Sinhala. The Sinhala identity is further confirmed by sources such as *Mahāvamsa*, *Dīpavamsa*, *Dhampiyā Atuvā Gāṭapadaya*,



Dharmapradīpikā and the original source of all in the *Sihalatṭhakathā*. The word Sinhala could mean 'like lion'. Hence, the name Sinhala race.

The critics who try to disassociate the term Sinhala from Sri Lanka are apparently distorting history by disowning Sri Lanka's great cultural heritage. As mentioned above the Sinhala possesses the hallmark of a fully developed nation with characteristics generally defined by the term 'nation'. The Sri Lankan identity has been typified by a Sinhala Buddhist culture with a recorded history over two millennium. Until recently Sri Lanka has been called *Serendip* by Arabs and *Ceylon* by the Europeans. These terms signify the nation Sinhala while the Tamil word *Ilām*, which the Tamil freedom fighters use to identify their homeland ironically has the connotation Sinhala. Cola and Pandyan inscriptions of the 10th century bear testimony to this identification. The Cola king Kulottunga III (1178 – 1218 AD) in one of his inscriptions explains his victories over the Sinhalese and says that he placed his feet on the crown of the king of *Ilām*.

Vijaya, the legendary founder of the Sinhala nation had married a princess from Madurai in South India. The princess from Madurai perhaps had been related to Vijaya and would have spoken an Aryan dialect. The city of Madurai belonged to the ancient Pandyan kingdom and is mentioned in the great Indian classic *Mahābhārata*. The princes whom Vijaya married perhaps belonged to Pandya dynasty who were not Tamils but Aryans. The Brahmi inscriptions found in caves in Madurai used as abodes by Buddhist monks resemble similar inscriptions found in the cave dwellings discovered in Sri

Lanka. There also had been close relations between city dwellers of Madurai and Sri Lanka.

Vijay's nephew was Panduvasudeva. He ruled the *Sihaladipa* immediately after Vijaya. He was then followed by Panduka Abhaya in the 4th century BC. This illustrates the dynastic connection that the Sinhalese had with the Pandavas. Nowhere in the Tamil literature is found that Sri Lanka was a country inhabited by Tamils or even that language was spoken in the early periods. The Tamil literary works such as *Tolkappiyam* and *Silappadikaram* have excluded Sri Lanka from the boundaries of Tamil land. This is an evidence to show that the country was mainly inhabited by the so called Sinhalese. Hence it was called Sihaladipa meaning the land of the Sinhalese.

The ancient Madurai was a Buddhist city during the Pandyan reign. The historical relations between the two countries, i.e. Sinhala and Pandya, lasted for at least fifteen centuries.

One of the earliest names for Sri Lanka was *Tambapanni* meaning copper coloured plain. The same name occurs in Pandya country in South India which is a name of a river in Tinnevely district. According to Kautilya (*arthaśāstra*) pearls were in plenty there. Was it possible that the Pandyans who migrated to Sri Lanka in the remote times called the north-western coast of Sri Lanka by the same name. The Pomparippu area, which was Tambapanni then, has now been excavated. The urn burials of this site were found to be similar to those found in the Tambapanni basin in South India. These urn burials found in Madurai are called *cadi* or *tali* and the sites are found in places like Anuppanadi, Dadampatti and





Pre-Christian Brāhmi Inscriptions.

6. a. Ilubaratahi Dameda-Samane karite Dameda-gaha patikana
 pasade (b) Śagaśa asane (c) Nasatasa asane (d) Ka...
 Tisaha asane (e) ... asane (f) Kubira Sujatataha (g)
 Navika Kāravaha asane.

The terrace of the Tamil-house-holder caused to be made by the Tamil Samana of Ilubarata (h) The seat of Saga (i) The seat of Nasata (j) The seat of Ka... Tissa (k) The seat of (l) Of Kubira Sujata (m) The seat of Kārava, the mariner.



Early Brāhmi inscriptions on potsherds from
 AMB-88(75) : ca. 600-500 BC.

Early Brāhmi Letters.

Paravi in Pandya country. They belong to about 3rd or 2nd century BC onwards say up to the 1st century AD. The megalithic monuments of the Pudukkottai region consist of dolomenoid cists with urn burial interment and are very similar to the ones found in Sri Lanka. Another interesting feature is the similarities of cave dwellings found in Madurai and in Anuradhapura even with regards to the language and the alphabet. These cave dwellings found in places like Anaimalai, Vadapalanji, Muttupatti belong to the 3rd or 2nd century BC. These caves are called Panca Pandava Padukkai and the city of Madurai is referred to as Madhira or Matavirai. This was the kingdom of Pandavas mentioned in *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*. The language of the inscriptions is Prakrit and the letters are Brahmi, similar to the Sri Lankan situation.

The famous Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of the 2nd century BC makes reference to a Pandya country and to a confederacy of Tamil states (*Trāmiradesasanghatam*). Therefore it is clear that Pandya kingdom was quite separate and independent from the rest of the states in south India. *Mahābhārata* refers to Dravidas, Colas, Keralas and Pandyas as the four divisions in south India. The second edict of Asoka in the 3rd century BC refers to Cola, Pandya, Satyaputra, Keralaputra and Tambapanni (Sri Lanka) as countries outside the Asokan empire.

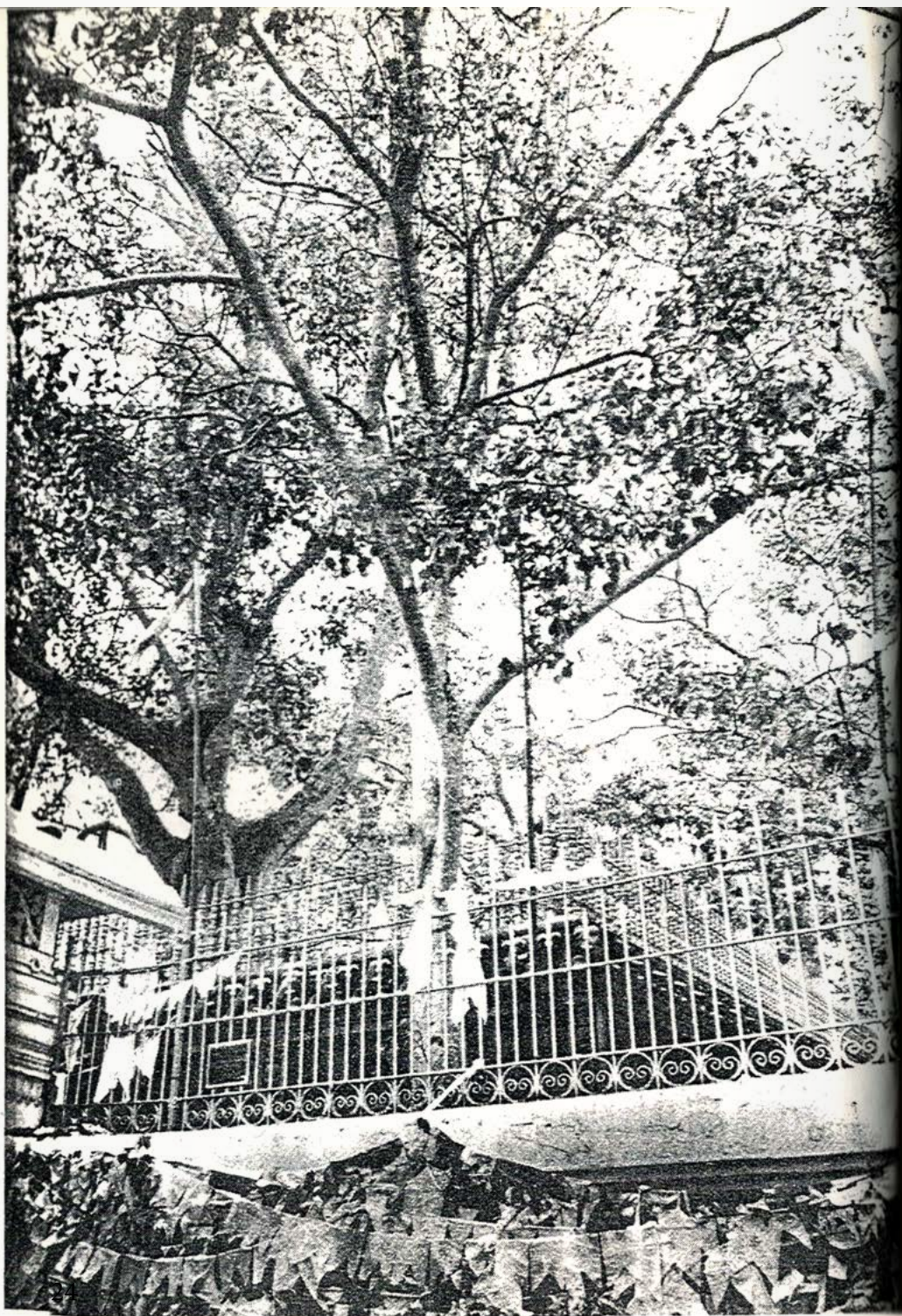
The Pandya country is also referred to in the Pali texts as a copper coloured region. Therefore it is quite natural for the academics to take an interest in finding out whether there was an early Pandyan connection with Sri Lanka. When we are talking of Dravidians or Tamils we are only talking of a linguistic group and not about an ethnic group. All south



Buddha-12th cen. Polonnaruwa

Indians are not Tamils. Only the people in Tamilnadu are called Tamils because they speak *Tamil*, a language belonging to the Dravidian group. So are Telegus(Telugu) of Andhra Pradesh, Malayalam of Kerala, and Kannada of Karnataka. The people in those areas formally belonged to Pallava, Cola, Cera and Pandya kingdoms. Pandyas and Pallavas came under the Colas in the 10th century and in the late medieval period together formed the vast Tamilnadu. On the other hand languages like Urdu, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kashmiri, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Sinhala and Devehi of Maldives belong to the Indo-Aryan group of languages. From the history it is clear that many of the south Indians who either captured or ruled Sri Lanka in the past were Pandyans and not the Tamila Colas. Colas came onto the scene during the 11th century at Polonnaruwa. The later Nayaks too who ruled from Kandy beginning in the 18th century belonged to the Pandya-Madurai dynasty. Because the south Indians spoke a language belonging to the Dravidian group, people in the south were also called Dravidians.

The island's history is chronicled in important works in the Pali language, namely the *Dipavamsa* written in the 4th century and the *Mahāvamsa* written in the 5th century AD. As it has been with most people, if not all, the earliest accounts of the origin of the majority Sinhala people in the country abound in myth and legend. However, scholars accept that a people speaking an Indo-Aryan dialect had migrated to this island from North India about five centuries before the Christian era. This is referred to as the legend of Vijaya and relates the story of a prince who came to Sri Lanka with a following of seven hundred. But this same story is narrated in another form in



ancient India. *Divyāvadāna*, the Sanskrit Buddhist literary work says that they were merchant adventurers. Historians believe that they were probably attracted by the pearl banks in the Northwest and precious stones in the Southeast. According to *Mahāvamsa*, Vijaya married the daughter of the king of Pandya and his retinue married the daughters of chieftains of the same Pandya country. This means that the early Vijaya colonisers had matrimonial connection with Pandyas. They would not have done this if there was no ethnic connection between the two groups. How can you bring them as wives if they cannot speak the language? Therefore it is probable that the women brought to Sri Lanka were Pandyan women who had a link with early settlers. Even Arjuna of *Mahābhārata* too got married to Chitrangadha the daughter of the ruler of Manipura or Madurai in Pandya desa. The Pandyans in Madurai may have been a north Indian community belonging to the Aryan race, and for that reason they were referred to as Southerners (dakkhina Madurai). However, this needs further research.

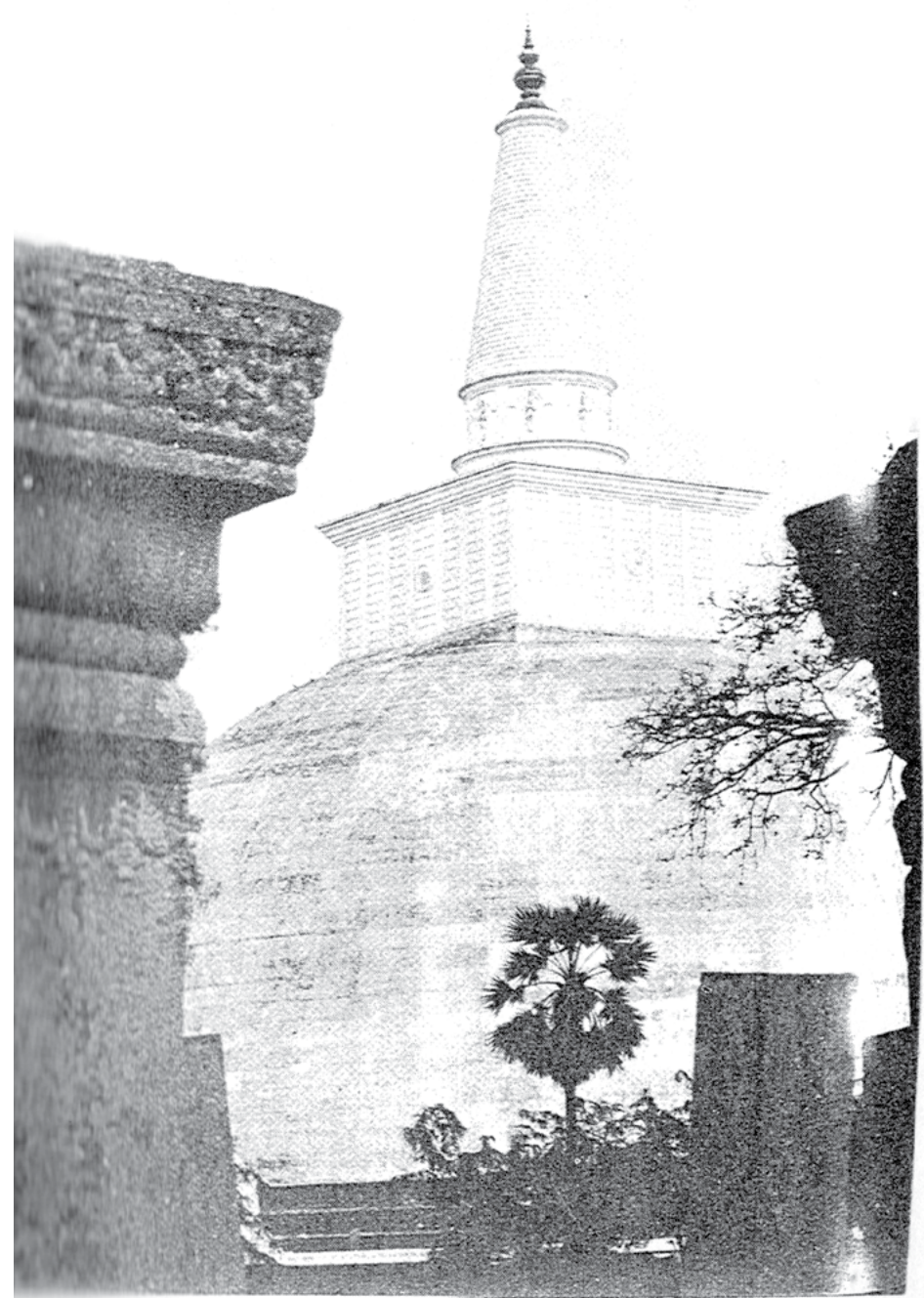
Paranavithana, the most celebrated Sri Lankan scholar and historian of our times, observed: "Aryan influence seems to have penetrated to the extreme south of the Indian peninsula before it arrived in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The ancient Pandya kings on the other hand traced their origin to the Pandavas, the heroes of *Mahābhārata*."

In the Brahmi inscriptions of the pre-Christian era in Sri Lanka the word *dameda* has been used in order to identify the people of Dravidian origin. In a rock inscription belonging to the 2nd century BC there is a reference to five Dravida householders (*dameḍa gahapatikana*). One of them had been called a sailor (*navika*) while the others were referred to as

Dravida traders (*dameḍa vanija*). Thus Dravidas who arrived in Sri Lanka had generally been traders. The rock or cave inscriptions made by these Dravida visitors record about the cave abodes, which they offered to Buddhist monks. They were written not in Tamil but in Sinhala using *Brāhmi* letters. These inscriptions specifically identify the donors as Dravidas because of their identity as a different ethnic group while in other inscriptions which record similar donations to Buddhist monks there seem to have been no necessity to indicate the donor's nationality because they were Sinhalese. The letters used in writing the inscriptions were Brahmi and the writers were naturally identified as Sinhala. The fact that Dravida dwellers needed to use the Sinhala language to record their donation confirms the fact that Dravidas who lived in Sri Lanka in the early period of history used the language of the majority community and the fact that they had offered cave dwellings to the Buddhist monks signify that the Sinhala Buddhist culture received Dravidian patronage. Furthermore these Dravidians had names of Aryan origin like Tisa, Visaka, Sena, etc. They are not Tamil names. This clearly shows that we are dealing with a linguistic group called *Damila* (Pali) or *demala* (Sinhala).

As noted by Father Robert Caldwell in his *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (1856) and confirmed by G. A. Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (Vol IV:1906) it is seen that Aryan and Dravidian tribes from time to time have occupied both the hills and the plains of India 'like islets in the sea'. Grierson noted that the Dravidian dialects were spoken by small tribes in the central provinces and even up the banks of

Ruvanvālisāya — Anurādhapura.





28
Guard Stone-Anuradhapura

the Ganges at Rajmahal and in the far north-west in Baluchistan. Gradually these tribes were subjected to ever increasing Aryan settlements and superseded by Aryan speech. Similarly some Aryan tribes settled down in the south where the *Dravida-bhasa* was spoken. They too were subjected to Tamil influence and they adopted Tamil as the language of their conquerors and even became Tamils losing their original ethnic identity. The same phenomenon occurred in Sri Lanka with regards to certain sections of Dravidas such as the Pandians, Cheras and Colas settling down in Sri Lanka and adopting Sinhala as their language and becoming ardent Sinhala-Buddhists as time went on.

Among the thousands of rock inscriptions which had been recorded from as early as the 3rd century BC upto 10th century AD the absence of any rock inscription in Tamil confirms the fact that Sri Lanka was mainly inhabited by the Sinhala in the early historic period. However in the 1st century BC two Dravida horse dealers had been able to capture power in Anuradhapura. They are named as Sena and Guttika. As a result of this South Indian invasion Buddhist monks fled to the Cola and Pandya kingdoms in South India. The famine which struck Sri Lanka also precipitated this influx of refugees to South India. This cannot be interpreted as a war between the Sinhala and the Tamil people.

Whenever the Sinhala kingdom became militarily weak there had been South Indian invasions. Thus after the Sinhalese king Vattagamini in the 1st century BC there had been a line of Dravidian kings like Pullatta, Bahiya, Panaya Mara and Dhatiya. It has also been recorded that among the paramours of the Sinhala queen Anula there had been



Parvati

Dravidians like Watuka and Nilaya. King Mutasiva, the father of Devanampiyatissa had a queen of Dravidian origin. However, all these above mentioned personal names suggest that they were people belonged to a common linguistic area called *Dravida desa* and they were not essentially Damila as an ethnic group. Elara who ruled Rajarata in the 2nd century BC and was respected for his just rule was called a Cola. In the war between Elara and Dutugemunu there had been Sinhala commanders fighting for Elara while the Sinhala king Dutugemunu had commanders of South Indian origin. The Dravidian commanders were said to have sailed to India after the battle between Elara and Dutugemunu. Thus in times of unrest South India would have found it politically expedient to invade the country. A Cola king according to the chronicle *Mahāvamsa* had taken 12000 prisoners from Sri Lanka to South India during the reign of Vankanasika Tissa, in the 2nd century. According to another legend it was king Gajabahu who had gone to India on this occasion to participate in an *abhiseka mangala* of a shrine built by the Cera king in honour of goddess Pattini that he brought back the captured prisoners with another 12,000 South Indians. The story of Gajabahu is related in the Tamil epic *Silappadikāram*. In the 5th century a prince named Mugalan fled to South India and obtained military aid from a friendly South Indian king, possibly a Pandyan king, and returned to Sri Lanka in order to capture power by ousting the ruling monarch – Sigiri Kasyapa. Thus the Dravida mercenaries who fought for Sinhala kings settled down in Sri Lanka. This bears testimony to their absorption into Sinhala society. However as the historical sources reveal to us there had been no contacts with the Colas from the 2nd



Abhayagiri Dagāba.

century up to the end of the 9th century but only with the Pandians.

We are not certain about the history of the Pallavas. Some have even suggested that Pallavas were originally Parthians (Pahlava) who moved from western India to the east coast in the 2nd century. Some others have suggested that they were from Vengi. The earliest records of the Pallavas are inscriptions in Prakrit followed by inscriptions in Sanskrit and subsequently in both Sanskrit and Tamil. The Tamil scholars anyhow tend to believe that the Pallavas represent the impact of an Aryan civilisation on Dravidian culture. They believe that the north Indian culture found its way to the south through the Pallavas. Their capitals were Kanchipuram and Amaravati which were centres of Buddhism. Many art forms flourished under the patronage of Pallava kings. They never attempted to conquer the island, but maintained a cultural and religious link. A vihara named *Pallavārama* is mentioned in our historical sources in association with the founding of the Abayagiri Viharaya. Manavamma, the son of Kassapa II in the 8th century, when overthrown by Dathopatissa fled to India where he took service with the Pallava king. He took part in his wars. Later the Pallava king helped him to return to Sri Lanka and regain the crown. It is also reported that in 642 AD the king of Sri Lanka helped Narasinha Varman to re-establish his Pallava kingdom. Thus the understanding among the two countries were reciprocal. However the relationship between Pallavas and Cheras was strong where as Pandians are reported to have harassed the Dravida dynasties. The Pallavas influenced the art and architecture of Sri Lanka during their powerful times. They also made the greatest contribution to Sinhala culture by

introducing the Pallava *grantha* script, which subsequently became the script of the Sinhala language from the 7th century.

During political conflicts in South India with the Colas gaining power after the 9th century, some Sri Lankan kings had been taking political advantage by being loyal to the powerful Tamils. Some historians even claim that Elara was a Kerala king and not a Tamil Cola that he was believed to be. The Cola invasion of Sri Lanka in the beginning of the 10th century is a sad story in the annals of our history. The Cola king Rajaraja learned of the situation in Anuradhapura with no ruler. In the year 993 the Colas landed in the north of Sri Lanka. They marched to Anuradhapura unopposed and captured the city. They sacked and set fire to it. They took all the treasures. The victorious Colas began their rule from then onwards. The seat of the Cola viceroy was moved from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa. The Sinhala king who was hiding in Rohana was captured and brought as a prisoner to the Cola kingdom in 1017 where he died in 1029. The new province of the Cola empire was named Mummuti Colamandalam and the capital Jananathamangalam. The rebellion against the Colas for liberation was started in Rohana until victory was seen under Vijayabahu in the year 1070 AD. The celebrated South Indian historian Nilakanta Shastri says that had there been no Vijayabahu there would perhaps have been no Sinhalese today. Sri Lanka saw a remarkable impact under the Cola rule. Large number of Tamil soldiers settled down and the country itself was introduced to a new religious belief system, political system and a multi ethnic social system. This led to a situation of insecurity which prevailed thereafter for many centuries for the Sinhalese. In 1215 AD Magha from



Parvati



Nataraja, Chola, 11th–12th C. Bronze.

Kalinga invaded the country with a large force from Kerala, blinded the ruling king Parakrama Pandu and captured the throne. His invasion and tyrannical rule finally saw the end of the great Rajarata civilisation that had existed for nearly fourteen centuries. Magha was a cruel king. He is described as a heretic, ungenerous, impatient, foolish, unjust, a rejoicer in evil laws and destroyer of the Buddhist dispensation. Jayabahu was another Dravidian who collaborated with him. This was a time of many thousands of Cola and Kerala forces that destroyed the country and the *Buddha Sāsana*. Magha harassed Buddhist monks in particular and launched a merciless onslaught against them. He converted many Buddhist *Vihāras* into residences for his soldiers. Many monks left the country and took shelter in Pandya country in South India. At this time the country looked to the Colas and the Pandians for help. Magha carried on his tyrannical rule from Polonnaruwa for twenty-one years, killing thousands of innocent Sinhala people.

Buddhism also played an important role in moulding South Indian – Sri Lankan relations in the past. As pointed out earlier it was during the reign of Emperor Asoka in the 3rd century BC that Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka. The second edict of Asoka refers to Cola, Pandya, Satyaputra, and Keralaputra in South India. According to Chinese historical sources which report on Mahinda's mission to Sri Lanka, he had also visited South India on his way on a similar mission. It has been stated that Venerable Aritta of Sri Lanka had gone on a mission to South India. Aritta Patti in the Pandya kingdom seemed to have been named in his memory. The *Brāhmi* inscriptions found in Mihintale in Sri Lanka bear resemblance to cave inscriptions found in the Pandyan region. Thus in the

pre-Christian era the South Indian – Sri Lankan relations seemed to have been predominantly Buddhist.

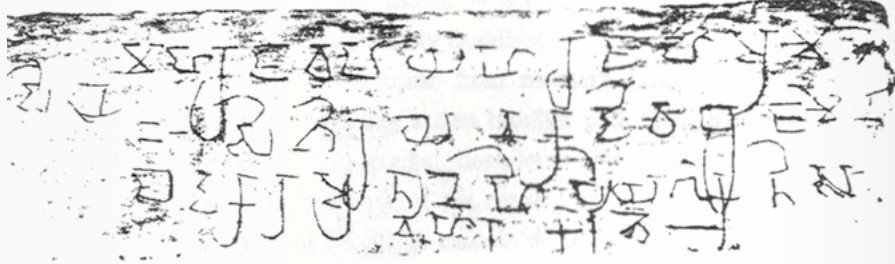
The Sinhalese who came from northern India five centuries before the Christian era also brought with them the religious beliefs of their original homeland. The personal names of the earlier members of the royalty as well as the ordinary ones which appear in the chronicles as well as in the inscriptions show the Brahmanical beliefs of these early people. *Baladeva*, *Rāma*, *Karna*, *Vāsudeva* and *Śiva* are some names to be mentioned. The *Brāhmi* inscriptions found in Mihintale belonging to the 3rd century BC have names such as *Rāmadattā* as the consort of *Devānampiyatissa* and *Varunadattā* as his sister-in-law. Both these names along with *Mutasīva* go to suggest Hindu-Brahminical association before the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

In the first century BC when Sri Lanka was afflicted with internal strife as well as famine Buddhist monks had sought refuge in the South Indian states of Cola and Pandya. Similarly South Indian monks had been helpful in writing Buddhist commentaries. For example Ven. Buddhadatta, the commentator, can be cited as a monk from Uragapura of Cola country who was ordained at Maha Vihara temple in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. Ven. Buddhaghosa followed Ven. Buddhadatta in the 5th century. Though the chronicles speak of Buddhaghosa as a resident of North India, his commentarial works suggest that he was a South Indian and belonged to Andhra country and spoke Telegu. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest Buddhist scholars that the world produced. Having come to Sri Lanka in the 5th century he entered the Mahaviharaya in Anuradhapura and learned Sinhala for the

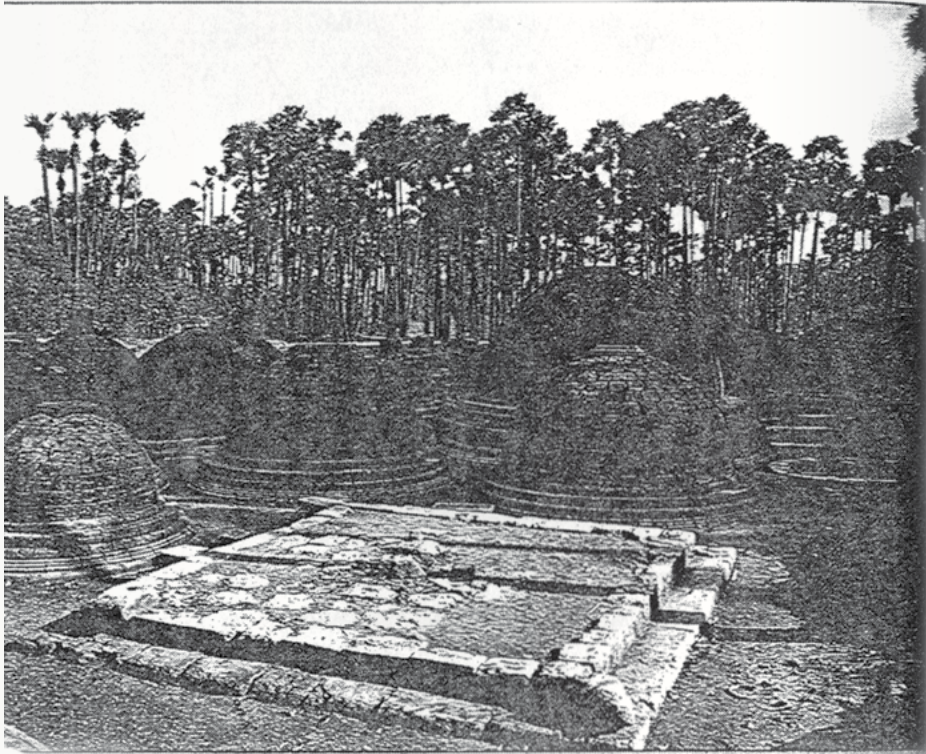


Toluville Buddha Image.

Vallipuram Gold Plate



Kantharodai.

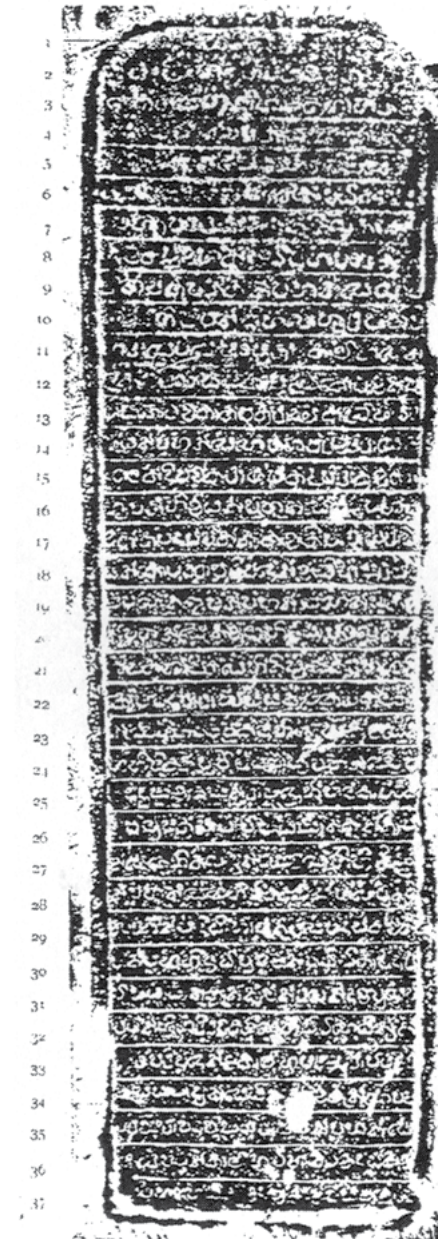


sake of studying the Tripitaka commentaries written in Sinhala and translated them into Pali for the benefit of a wider reading public. His greatest scholarly work is the *Visuddhimagga* spoken by all Buddhist scholars as one of the greatest contributions to Buddhist scholarship. During this period the Mahavihara maintained close contacts with scholars of South Indian centres of Theravada Buddhism and the commentaries refer to them as *pārasamuddavasins*. Buddhaghosa was followed by Ven. Dhammapala who was credited with the authorship of many commentaries. He was from Badara Tiththa near Madras. He had been credited with fourteen commentaries. There had been Buddhist commentaries written in South Indian languages too. A commentary written in the language of the Andhras (Telugu) known as *Andhaṭṭhakathā* is an example. Monks like Buddhamitta and Maha Kassapa were of Cola origin. Kanchipuram and Nagapattanam in the Cola kingdom were Buddhist centres. So were Madurai in Pandya country and Dhanyakataka. Among the many Buddhist books written in South India *Manimekalei* can be cited as a Tamil work of a Tamil Buddhist-nun.

In the 7th century Huen Tsang reports the existence of Buddhist ruins in the Pandyan kingdom. During the reign of king Mahasena in Sri Lanka a Cola monk called Sanghamitta had started building Jetavana Mahaviharaya at Anuradhapura. There had been constant contact between Sri Lanka and the Andhra region of South India in the 4th century. At the advent of the Christian era there had been Sinhala – Buddhist monasteries at Amaravati in the Andhra region. Buddhist monks had been travelling to and from the Andhra region. As a result the Buddha image in sculpture as well as the building of

stūpas in Sri Lanka were influenced by the Andhra tradition. Thus there had been religious, economic and political ties between South India and Sri Lanka. Until towards the end of the 9th century of the Anuradhapura period there had not been a conflict between Sri Lanka and South India.

Whenever there was trouble in Sri Lanka, whether it was political unrest or famine, the Buddhist monks made a habit of escaping to South India for safety. South Indian Dravidian monks also followed the same example. Sri Lankan kings made grants available to Tamil monks. This is recorded in the Vevelketiya inscription. This has happened several times in history. When Magha invaded Sri Lanka in the 13th century the monks again escaped to South India and it was on the invitation of King Vijayabahu II that the monks returned to continue their religious duties. On this occasion the king had invited learned Cola monks to propagate the doctrine here. This was the cordial atmosphere under which cultural activities were undertaken by the king. By the 11th century there were a considerable number of South Indian Tamils living in Sri Lanka. King Vijayabahu I employed Velaikkara soldiers as his personal bodyguards. They were the same mercenaries who safeguarded the Tooth Relic at Polonnaruwa. This medieval capital of Sri Lanka is a symbol of religious and ethnic harmony. As I have pointed out in my book *Polonnaruwa*, this city with Buddhist and Hindu shrines on the same grounds embracing a common architectural tradition and royal palaces once occupied by both Sinhala – Buddhist and Tamil – Hindu kings portrays the unity and integrity of the island, even under the Cola rule.



Polonnaruwa Slab inscription of Vijayabahu II

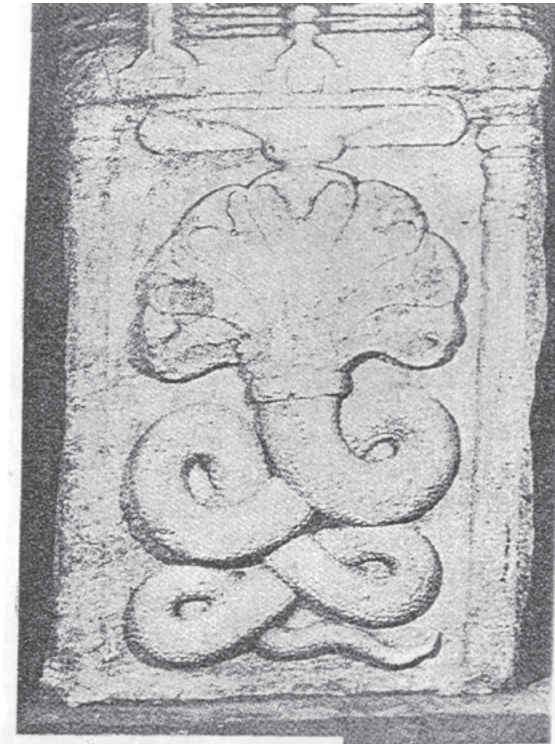
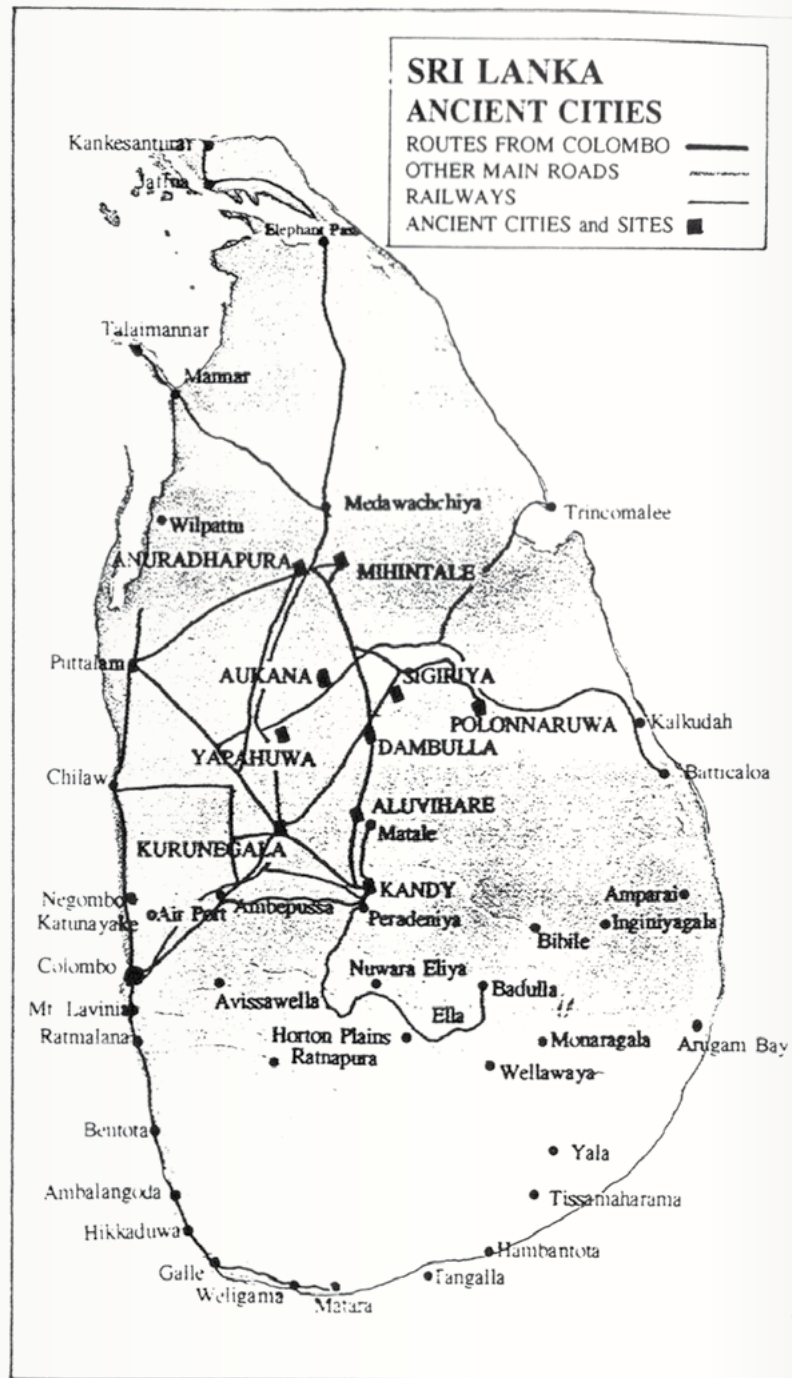


Sigiriya Paintings

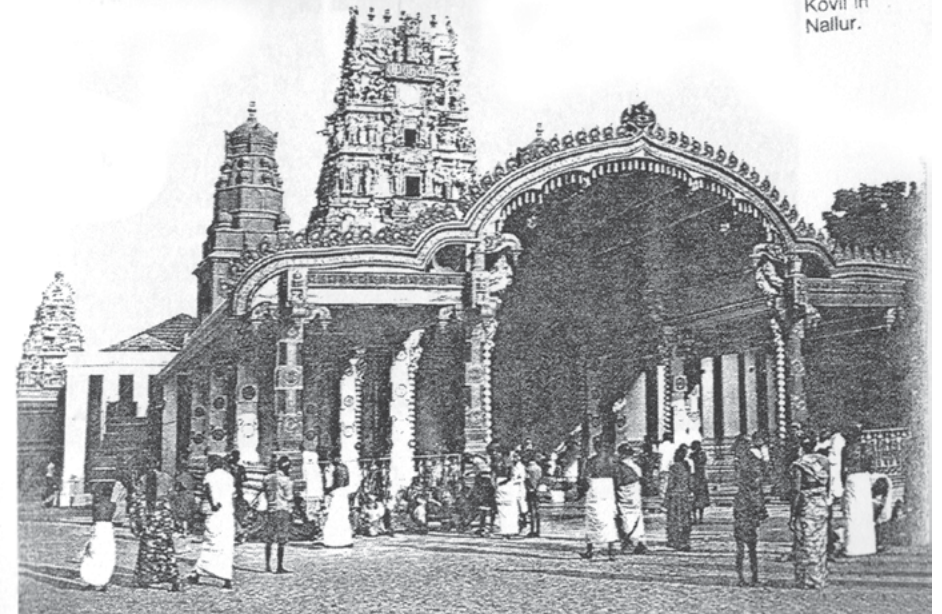
How the Sinhala-Tamil conflict broke out against this background of long established friendly relations between South India and Sri Lanka must also be considered. The political balance of power between Sri Lanka and South India was maintained by the Sinhalese kings based on the power struggle going on in South India. By the 7th century we see the birth of empires in South India beginning with Pallavas and followed by Pandyas and Colas. The political power, whatever its nature in South India was a major threat to Sri Lanka. In this regard we see the south Indian rulers as well as the Sri Lankan rulers supporting individual rulers on the throne. The Sinhalese kings also took the offensive when they were strong enough to fight the South Indians.

We also see instances where the Sinhalese princes sought military support from South India for their own struggle at home. The first instance is recorded in the 1st century when Ilanaga captured the throne with foreign troops. Two centuries later Abhayana brought over Tamil soldiers to fight his enemies. In the 5th century as stated above Moggallana returned from South India with troops to oust Kassapa his brother from the throne. By the 7th century as we observe from the chronicle there are at least five instances where Tamil troops were brought over to Sri Lanka to fight their domestic enemies. This led to an over population of Tamils in the country to the dislike of the Sinhalese.

The Sinhalese kings sometimes enthroned South Indian princes. *Cūlavamsa* relates how King Sena in the 9th century invaded the Pandyan country and succeeded in placing his nominee on the Pandya throne. Manavarma, the son of Kasyapa II, was overthrown by Dathopatisa fled to India



Nāga Guard-Stone Jetavana Vihāra

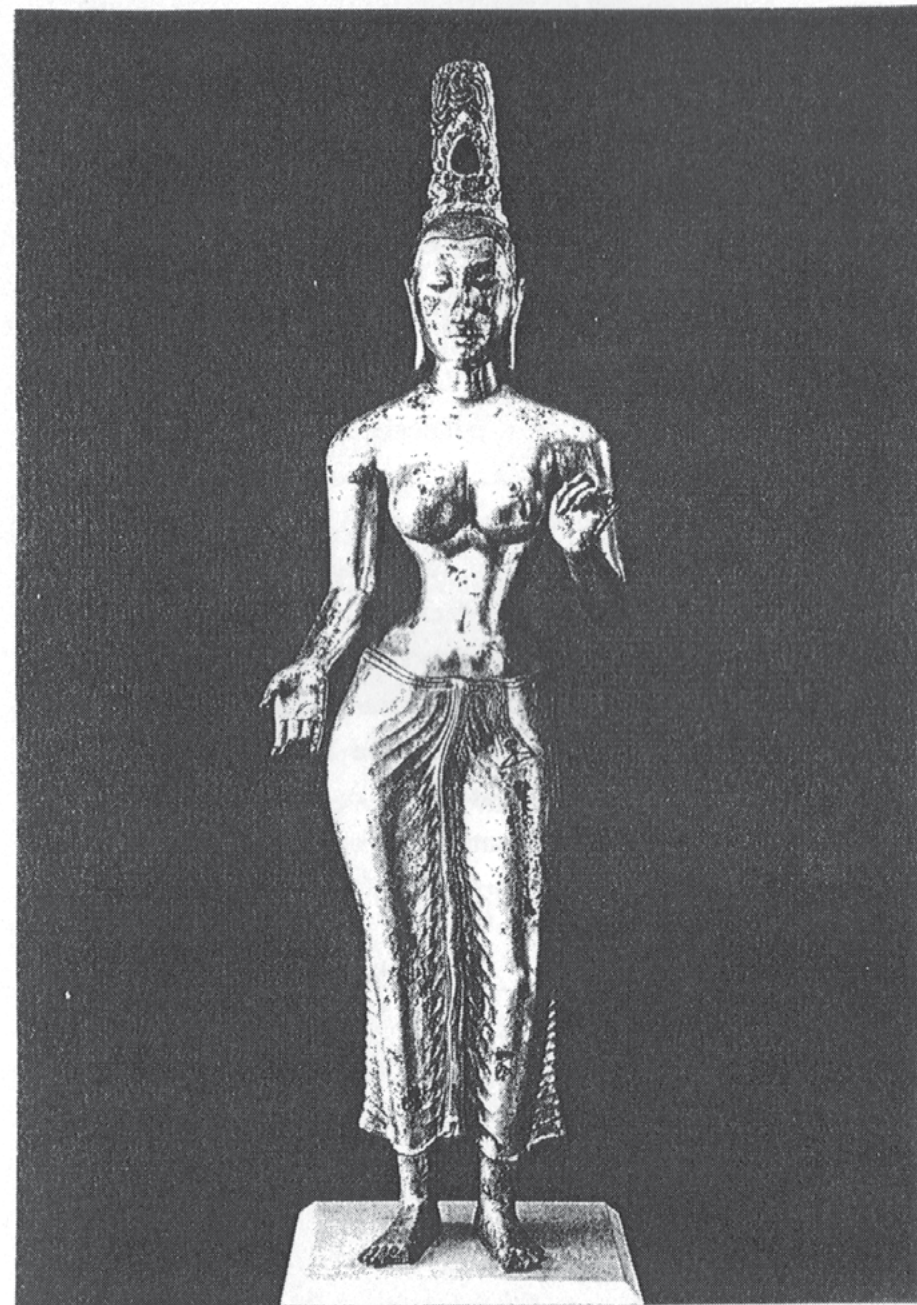


Kandaswamy Kovil in Nallur.

The Cola administration during the Polonnaruwa period not only looked after the interest of the Buddhists but also made offerings to Buddhist Viharas. Similarly the Buddhist kings provided the royal patronage necessary for the maintenance of the Hindu temple and its rituals. Nissankamalla was one such king who was very much inspired by Hindu culture and the arts though he was considered a protector and promoter of Buddhism.

Mahatheras from Cola country in particular, assisted Parakramabahu II in the 13th century in the restoration of Buddhism after Magha's rule. It was again a Cola monk who was appointed to the high office of *Mahathera* by Parakramabahu IV in the 14th century. In the 7th century two Saiva temples were seen at the ports of Matota (Mantai) called Tiruketisvaram and other Gokanna or Trincomalie. They were supposed to have been built by Tamil Saiva traders. This also established the fact that there was a Tamil population of considerable strength living in around Mantai and Trincomalie during this period.

The nature of the economic ties which existed between Sri Lanka and South India, is also an important aspect that should be considered. There had been South Indian horse dealers who were called *kudira wetti* in Sri Lanka. Mahathittha in Sri Lanka was a sea port where the South Indian traders had frequently disembarked. Gokanna (Trincomalie) has also been identified as an ancient port famous for foreign trade. There is also evidence that there had been Sri Lankan merchants in the Cola and Pandya regions who were identified by the terms such as *Thenni*, *Lankei* and *Valangiver*.



Tara-9th century
Now in the British Museum

where he took service with Pallava king. He also took part in the war. The Pallava king Narasinhavarman helped him in return to regain the throne. However the Pallavas never attempted to conquer Sri Lanka.

There is the possibility that most of the Tamil mercenaries who were brought to the island from South India from time to time stayed behind permanently. The *Culavamsa* records eight instances of mercenary troops landing on the island in the seventh century alone.

The rise of Cola imperialism in the 9th century destabilised Sri Lanka as their political supremacy gained ascendancy over Sinhala power. During internal conflicts South Indian mercenaries had been brought to Sri Lanka. Thus by 9th century there were pockets of Tamil warriors occupying areas around the Sinhala capital Anuradhapura. They have been referred to as *Demel Kebella*, *Demel gambim* and *Demel kinigam*. As time went on these mercenaries became a menace causing Sinhala kings much trouble. In the 10th century the Sinhala king Mahinda declared that Sri Lanka should be ruled by a Buddhist as a result of the anti Buddhist activities which the Tamil mercenaries were engaged in. The last king of Anuradhapura, King Mahinda V was not strong enough to crush the rebellion started by the Kerala mercenaries.

The king fled the country allowing Colas to capture power. Colas were keen to dominate the whole of South India in the beginning of the 9th century. The Pandyans sought the assistance of the Sinhala king Kassapa V to defeat the Colas. He readily supplied him with an army. A great battle was fought at Velur in which combined armies of the Pandyan and the Sinhalese could not prevail against the Colas. In the 10th



Potgul Vihara Statue

century Rajaraja and Rajendra of Cola were able to capture power in northern Sri Lanka. This precipitated an influx of Tamil migrations. Thus Tamil power started to grow and the rulers had inscriptions written in Tamil too for them to read. Buddhist temples were sacked by the Tamil aggressors enraging the Sinhala Buddhists. The destruction of Buddhist places of worship by Sinhala kings like Dhatopatissa and Kassapa II was tolerated as they were trying to raise funds for the war against the Tamils. But when the South Indian aggressors resorted to such violence the Sinhala Buddhists were enraged and this led to the deep rooted hatred of Tamils which continued to prevail in this country. Colas became rulers of Northern Sri Lanka as well as parts of Southern Sri Lanka. However Wickrama Pandu and Parakrama Pandu who were ruling in the south were Pandians who had long standing relationships with the Sinhala. They regarded Colas as their common enemy. The marriage of the sister of the Sinhala king Vijayabahu I to a Pandyan princess can be considered as a marriage of political convenience and as a renewal of the former friendly relations with the Pandians.

When Vijayabahu I in the 11th century decided to invade the kingdom of Cola, the Tamil mercenary army called 'Veleikkara' rebelled. But Vijayabahu I was able to defeat the Tamil mercenaries and come to power in Polonnaruwa in the 11th century. The mercenary battalion of 'Veleikkara' was entrusted with the task of guarding the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic as well as the Hindu temples as the king regarded them as trustworthy. This sacred duty would have given them a psychological satisfaction in serving the Sinhala king. With the



Polonnaruwa Slab Inscription of
Vijayabahu II



demise of Vijayabahu I the 'Veleikkara' mercenaries also became powerful.

Cūlavamsa speaks about the plunder and destruction caused by the Colas: They plundered many costly images of gold from the shrines of the three *Nikāyas* in all Lanka and violently destroyed all monasteries in different parts of the land and like blood sucking *yakkhas* pillaged Sri Lanka of its wealth.

At this juncture of events we can evaluate the reasons for the Sinhalese anger against the invading Dravidians. The reasons are many:

1. Invasion
2. Establishing a foreign rule
3. Plunder, and
4. Destroying Buddhist *viharas* and monasteries

like what they did in South

India by completely eradicating Buddhism from the soil.

However, in order to maintain a balance of power a political strategy was adopted by the ruling Sinhala kings against the South Indian rulers. One was to side with the powerful rulers at the time in South India in order to safeguard the throne and the country from attack and invasion. The second method was to establish matrimonial alliances between the two to further strength the ties and the third way was to anticipate military help such as to loan an army or mercenaries from South India to fight the enemies within and outside. These included the *Velaikkaras* of South India.

The king Vijayabahu I was related to both Kalinga and Pandava dynasties of South India. By his first queen



JAFFNA NALLUR KANDASWAMY TEMPLE: Traditional Hindu ceremony

Lilavati, the daughter of Jagatipala, he had a daughter named Yasodhara. She married the prince Viravamma who was placed in charge of the Matale district. By him she had two daughters, Lilavati and Sugala. By Tilokasundari, the second queen from Kalinga, he had five daughters, Subhadra, Sumitra, Lokanatha, Ratnavali and Rupavati and a son named Vikramabahu. His sister Mitta, who married a Pandya prince, had three sons, Manabharana, Kirtisrimegha and Sri Vallabha, who married respectively Ratnavali, Lokanatha and Sugala.

Ratnavali was the daughter of Vijayabahu and wife of king Manabharana. The son of Ratanavali and Manabharana was Parakramabahu the Great, the Sinhala hero of Polonnaruwa. His paternal side is linked to the Pandya royal family of the moon dynasty. After Parakramabahu's death Nissankamalla, a Kalinga prince, became the king. However Maga, a Kalinga king, invaded Sri Lanka and sacked the country causing colossal destruction. The invading Maga had an army of 24,000 Kerala soldiers. Due to this invasion Buddhist monks fled to South India. Thus South Indian aggressors who invaded Sri Lanka had always been anti-Buddhist and brought about untold destruction to the Sinhala. As a result the Sinhala-Tamil conflict began to grow with each invasion.

After the downfall of the Cola Empire in South India in the 13th century Pandyans again rose to power and glory. They waged frequent wars in Sri Lanka. In some of the inscriptions, Sundara Pandyan speaks of taking *Ilām* under his control. Sri Lanka during this time was invaded by the Pandyans several times. One time an army was sent under a General named Arya Cakravarti. The ruling king in Sri Lanka



Yapahuwa and a wood carving from Embekke Devale

at this time was king Parakramabahu III. He visited the Pandyan kingdom which was a clear sign of subjugation. By the 14th century the Pandyan kingdom lost its vigour. In the year 1336 AD the Vijayanagara Empire was founded in South India.

It was during this time that the Jaffna kingdom was founded. The legendary history of Jaffna in the north is recorded in the *Yālpāna Vaipava Mālai*, which is not considered a history book. It explains the colonisation of Jaffna by some chieftains from South India during Arya Cakravarti's time. The famous Nallur Temple was also built during this period. It was the invasion of the Pandyans in 1282 which weakened the Sinhalese kings and helped Arya Cakravarti to gain authority in the north. Pandyans also took away the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha which was brought back by the Sinhala King later. Arya Cakravarti claimed tax and tributes from the Sinhala kings in the South. The result was that there was constant revolt between the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Jaffna. It is said that Parakramabahu VI in the 15th century wiped out the Jaffna kingdom by sending his adopted son Prince Sapumal to Jaffna accompanied by the Vanni Chiefs.

However, in this context it is interesting to note that Kartigesu Indrapala in his Doctoral Thesis submitted to the SOAS in 1965 on *The Dravidian Settlement in Early Sri Lanka* pointed out that there was no evidence in the Sri Lankan Chronicles to say that there were Tamil settlements in the Island either in the pre-Christian period or in the early centuries of the Christian era. He further says that after the 2nd century AD there was a long gap till the 7th century where we



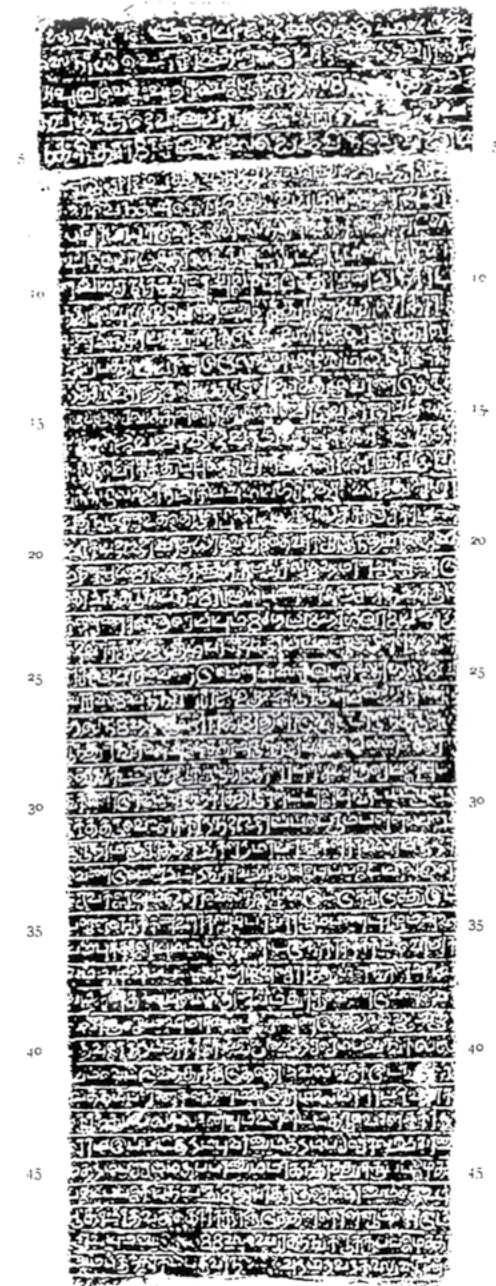
*Man and horse representing Agni and Parjanya
Isurumuniya.*

get some evidence that points to possible Tamil settlements in the Island. It is only in the 10th century that we get definite evidence in the Sinhalese and Tamil inscriptions and to a small extent in the Pali chronicles relating to Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka. This is to say that there were no widespread Tamil settlements before the 10th century. He says that these settlements were by no means extensive but they formed the nucleus of the later settlements that covered the greater part of the northern and eastern province which were transformed into Tamil speaking areas.

Ariya Chakravartis either of Pandya, Kalinga, or Rajput origins but not Cola were able to rule in the north for sometime until Parakramabahu IV recaptured the Sinhala kingdom in 15th century. The Tamils in the north continued to live under the Sinhala king despite the strained relations between the two people. In the 13th century king Vijayabahu III recalled all the monks who fled the country. King Parakramabahu of Dambadeniya was able to seek the patronage of Cola monks. Parakramabahu installed a Cola monk as *Mahasami* or chief high priest of the Island.

In a small country like Sri Lanka with relatively few resources, its rulers could no way match their Indian counterparts. Nevertheless they were able to take their armies across to South India in a weakened Indian situation. We have instances where Sena II in the 9th century, Parakramabahu I and Nissankamalla in the 12th century invading South India. As one historian points out "these invasions, from whichever side they originated, were a matter of power rather than one of ethics". What has survived in Sri Lankan records is the story of the destruction caused by them, more particularly the havoc done

the Gold plate inscription of Vasabha in the 2nd century was found mentioning a Buddhist Vihara we see today a Vishnu temple. At Moolai another Vishnu temple is found instead of an ancient Buddhist Vihara. At Nilavarai a Shiva temple has come up in a place where there was a 10th century Buddhist Vihara. Kantarodai was a very important Buddhist site with stupas but today it is completely destroyed. Modern Jaffna has a Saiva population. But that is no reason for the Tamils to destroy all the historic and religious monuments just to build up a new history. As pointed out by Indrapala, the Sanskrit inscription from Trincomalie discovered among the ruins of the Konesvaram temple refers to a personage named Codaganga. The inscription is on a stone door jamb. It has the name Gokana, the ancient name of Trincomalie from which the name of the temple is derived – *Gokarnesvara*. One other revelation by the same author is the Tamilisation of the North after the 13th century. He says, in the Vanni districts only a few Dravidian style Saiva temples of the thirteenth century have been found. Among these the temples at Tirukkovil, Kapuralla and Nalatanniirakkam and the Saiva remains at Uruttirapuram and Kuruntanur are notable. These certainly indicate the existence of Tamil settlements in those places in the 13th century. But monumental remains of a different type attest to the destruction wrought by the invaders and the conversion of Buddhist institutions into places of Saiva worship, effected by the new settlers, thus confirming the statements in the Sinhala sources. The many scattered ruins of Buddhist monasteries, temples and villages all over the Vanni region preserve the memory of the Sinhalese Buddhist settlements that once covered these parts. Indrapala goes on to mention a few places



Velaikkara slab inscription



Vishnu-Polonnaruwa

the end of the Rajarata Kingdom in the 13th century. Over the years with an ongoing war in these areas there has been an attempt to re-write or re-interpret history by the non academic Tamil historians and popular writers glorifying a non existent home-land of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Among them are C. Rasanayagam, C. S. Navaratnam, Fr. Gnanapragasar and few others. We have to be free from bias and prejudices in our academic pursuit and facts must be presented as facts. Before the 13th century the so called Dravidian settlements in the north and east were confined to few a pocket areas and these remained scattered and concentrated mainly around the ports. Northern and Eastern areas were actually occupied by the Sinhala-Buddhists. If we examine the current place names in the north and east we will recognise the original Sinhala names and see that they have changed into Tamil over the years. The Island's chronicles, literature and inscriptions will bear testimony to this. Sinhala village Kokavila became Kokkuvil in Tamil. Uduvila became Uduvil, Madavila became Madduvil, Polvatta became Polvattai (coconut estate), Kadurugoda became Kantarodai, Pana-ela became Pannalai, Nagakovila is now Nakarkovil (in Tamil), Telipola is Tellippalai, Mallagam is Mallakkam, Nagadivayina became Nayinativu, Karadivayina became Karaitivu, Weligama became Valikamam. We do not say that this change was intentional but it is the result of a natural linguistic phenomenon. With a dominant Tamil population further changes have taken place. But this time it was intentional. Most of the ancient Buddhist places of worship have become places of Hindu worship today. It is unfortunate to say that like linguistic change a change in the place of worship is also a natural process. In Vallipuram where



Vishnu Devale-Polonnaruwa and
Kandyan Painting



the Gold plate inscription of Vasabha in the 2nd century was found mentioning a Buddhist Vihara we see today a Vishnu temple. At Moolai another Vishnu temple is found instead of an ancient Buddhist Vihara. At Nilavarai a Shiva temple has come up in a place where there was a 10th century Buddhist Vihara. Kantarodai was a very important Buddhist site with stupas but today it is completely destroyed. Modern Jaffna has a Saiva population. But that is no reason for the Tamils to destroy all the historic and religious monuments just to build up a new history. As pointed out by Indrapala, the Sanskrit inscription from Trincomalie discovered among the ruins of the Konesvaram temple refers to a personage named Codaganga. The inscription is on a stone door jamb. It has the name Gokana, the ancient name of Trincomalie from which the name of the temple is derived – *Gokarnesvara*. One other revelation by the same author is the Tamilisation of the North after the 13th century. He says, in the Vanni districts only a few Dravidian style Saiva temples of the thirteenth century have been found. Among these the temples at Tirukkovil, Kapuralla and Nalatanniirakkam and the Saiva remains at Uruttirapuram and Kuruntanur are notable. These certainly indicate the existence of Tamil settlements in those places in the 13th century. But monumental remains of a different type attest to the destruction wrought by the invaders and the conversion of Buddhist institutions into places of Saiva worship, effected by the new settlers, thus confirming the statements in the Sinhala sources. The many scattered ruins of Buddhist monasteries, temples and villages all over the Vanni region preserve the memory of the Sinhalese Buddhist settlements that once covered these parts. Indrapala goes on to mention a few places

where Buddhist Image Houses were found in places like Kovikadu, Malikai, Omantai, Kanakarayan-kulam, Iracentiram-kulam, Cinnappuvaracankulam and Madukanda and says that they were converted into Saiva temples and often dedicated to Ganesha. Buddha images and inscribed slabs from the Buddhist Viharas were used to make Hindu images.

A large number of the settlers upto the 10th century in Sri Lanka were Malabars or *Cheras* and they were more numerous than the Tamils. It was after the 13th century that Jaffna became the centre for Tamil migration. Aryacakravarti too came to invade Sri Lanka during this period with an army from Kerala and destroyed the whole of the Rajarata kingdom which was then under the Sinhala rule.

The Sinhala – Tamil suspicion, misunderstanding and conflict started as a result of invasions and the sacking of Buddhist places of worship by the Tamils. Even king Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe of Kandy who had done great service to Buddhism failed to win the patronage of the Buddhist clergy, as he didn't belong to a Buddhist royal dynasty. The Buddhist clergy felt suspicious of his intentions in helping Buddhism as they felt he was doing it for political reasons. Therefore the *Sangharaja*, the Supreme High Priest of Malwatte Vihara, tried to depose him.

During the British regime there was an influx of South Indian Tamil labourers who were brought to Sri Lanka to be employed in tea plantations. The land, which then belonged to the majority Sinhala peasants, was acquired by the English for plantation even without compensation. At present it is being re-allocated to Tamil workers in plantations depriving the Kandyan Sinhala peasants of their right to land ownership. At



Lankatilaka Vihara—designed by a Dravidian Architect
14th Cen. Kandy.

Kandyan Painting—Gangarama Vihara, Kandy.18th Cen.

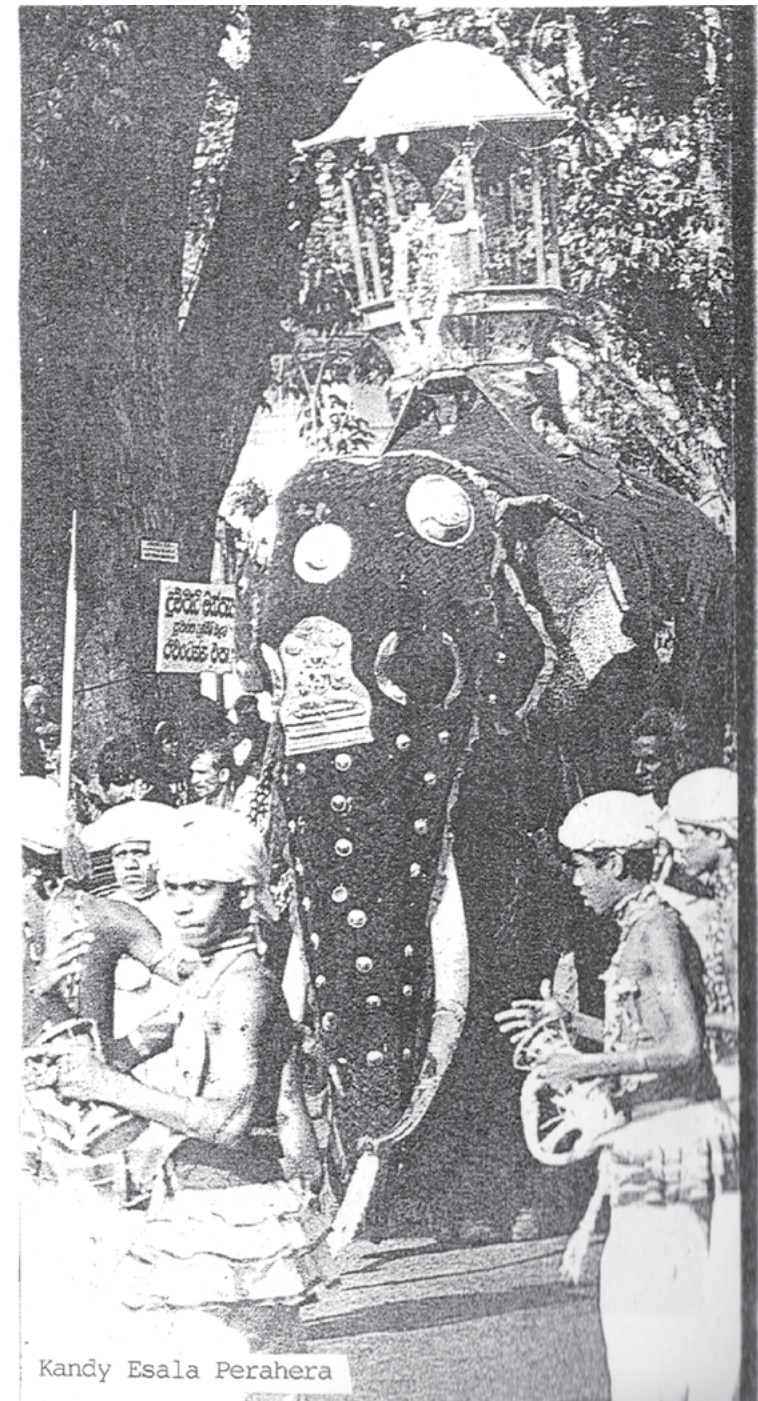


present the so called ethnic conflict has created a tendency to deny the majority community the right to live in any part of the country. The Tamils claim land in the north as well as in the hill country. This has placed the majority community, the Sinhala in a precarious situation of landlessness when the Tamils are apparently claiming two third of Sri Lanka's soil.

However, leaving the political aspect to be considered by another, I will confine myself to the theme. The South Indians also have contributed to the development of arts, crafts and literature in Sri Lanka. In the early period of history though there had been a North Indian influence the South Indian influence gained supremacy towards the later stages. An interim period could be identified when relations with Kalinga region prospered. As mentioned before, since the 7th century Sri Lanka came into close contact with South India. This had resulted in a strong cultural impact on Sri Lanka. In the ruined cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa the influence of Pallava and Cola architecture, sculpture and paintings can be identified. In the 14th century, temples like Lankatilaka, Gadaladeniya and Natha Devalaya in Kandy were built in the architectural traditions of Vijayanagar.

Tamil was taught along with Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit in the *pirivenas* – the Buddhist monastic educational centres as witnessed by our own Sinhala literary sources even from the 15th century. But with the colonial education system our traditional values soon disappeared giving rise to a divided nation and country.

Sinhala literary traditions such as *Sandesa*, *Praśasti*, *Upadeśa* and *Haṭan Kāvya* poetic traditions which gained popularity during the Kotte period and depict South



Kandy Esala Perahera



Kataragama Devale-Kavadi Dancers
Kandyan Ritual Dancers



Indian influence. Sinhala drama as well as dancing and drums were influenced by South Indian traditions. Even some of the social customs seemed to have been influenced by South India. Thus relations between Sri Lanka and South India have always been intimate.

Importation of artificers from South India continued even in the eighteenth century. Ananda Coomaraswamy says that the *Navandanno* artificers consisted partly of indigenous craftsmen and partly of newly-settled Tamil artificers coming from South India to work for the king who showed them favour and made them grant of land.

Commenting on Sinhala music Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra says that there is reason to believe, at least with regard to music and dancing, that when these arts came into contact with more developed forms from South India, and also began to receive the patronage of religion and of the educated, they developed considerably although in some cases sporadically.

Sacred places such as Kataragama, Sri Pada, Munnesvaram and Kandy even today symbolise the common religious feelings and devotion of the Sinhala and Tamil people. The Kandy Esala Perahara is special because it is one such religious festival that speaks about the historical and the religious harmony of the two ethnic groups.

One cannot disregard the geographical situation of Sri Lanka which makes it vulnerable to South Indian influence. Since India is powerful and a large country Sri Lanka cannot escape its regional domination. The people who migrated to Sri Lanka from South India over thousands of years must assimilate into the majority community by sharing each others

cultural features and living together making the whole of Sri Lanka their only home. There cannot be two houses but only one.

However the Tamils in the North have not assimilated in the same way as one would expect nor do they accept the majority community. Their determination is to form a separate state in the north and east of the island. While half the Tamil populations live among the Sinhalese, the unfortunate Sinhalese are driven away from the majority Tamil areas claiming it their land. The final truth is that nothing belongs to anybody and as the Buddha said not even yourself.

As in other parts of the globe, peaceful co-existence is feasible only if the minority communities tolerate the cultural values of the majority community. Sri Lankan Tamils need to recognise the fact that by trying to form another Tamil Nadu in Sri Lanka they are promoting sectarianism. The Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils need to accept the language and culture of each other as a national heritage and live peacefully safeguarding their own cultural identity. The majority Sinhala people should respect the language and culture of the Tamils and their ethnic identity. The compromise that could be reached is by negotiated political discussion and not by wars. Both parties should realise this fact. Therefore some sort of political autonomy for the Tamil speaking areas is a must in the present context.

Co-existence among the two main nationalities could be brought about by cultural integration, assimilation and socialisation. It is up to the minority Tamils to take the first step towards this end. It is by accepting the majority culture that harmonious living could be established. No effort is



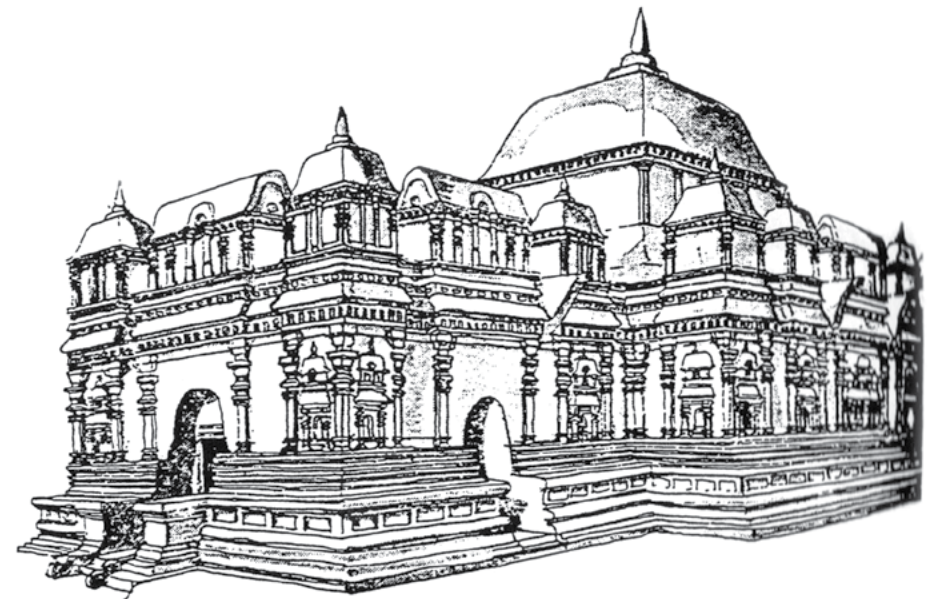
Line drawings

Tivanka Pilimage-12th Cen. Polonnaruwa

needed but co-existence or living together as one family under a single roof. For this one needs understanding, love and sympathy. The political hindrance must be got rid of if this is to be achieved. Let the politicians keep out leaving the innocent people to solve their own problem.

The political conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils on the question of a divided Sri Lanka if won by the Tamils will be a separate Sri Lanka and an Ilam in the same land. Sinhala, Tamils and Muslims will live in Sri Lanka and Tamils will live in Ilam. However it must be said that neither the Sinhalese nor the Tamils qualify to live separately as two different ethnic groups. As far as we can see from our historical records, the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka are not pure by birth to be called themselves today as Sinhala and Tamil. We use these terms because we need an identity. Today the Sinhalese are a mixture of Veddas and Tamils in majority areas like in the north central, eastern and in the central highlands. Tamils on the other hand are a mixture of Colas, Pandyas, Pallavas and Cheras in South India. They have got mixed up with the Sinhalese in the past and with the Muslims and Burghers recently. The majority of the Tamils in Sri Lanka as seen by our own history were Pandians and Cheras (Keralas) who were not Tamils. Most of the people of Kerala origin in Sri Lanka claim Sinhala identity today while some of the Sinhala caste groups with their clear south Indian origins fight for Sinhala-Buddhist rights. Most of the present day so called Tamils originally entered the country as mercenaries during wars between Sri Lanka and South India as well as mercenaries fighting for the Sinhala kings. On the other hand speaking of the Sinhalese, a large number of people

Dravidian Architecture with a Buddhist Outlook



Thūpārāma Temple, Polonnaruwa (conjectural reconstruction)

Tea Plantation-Nuwara Eliya

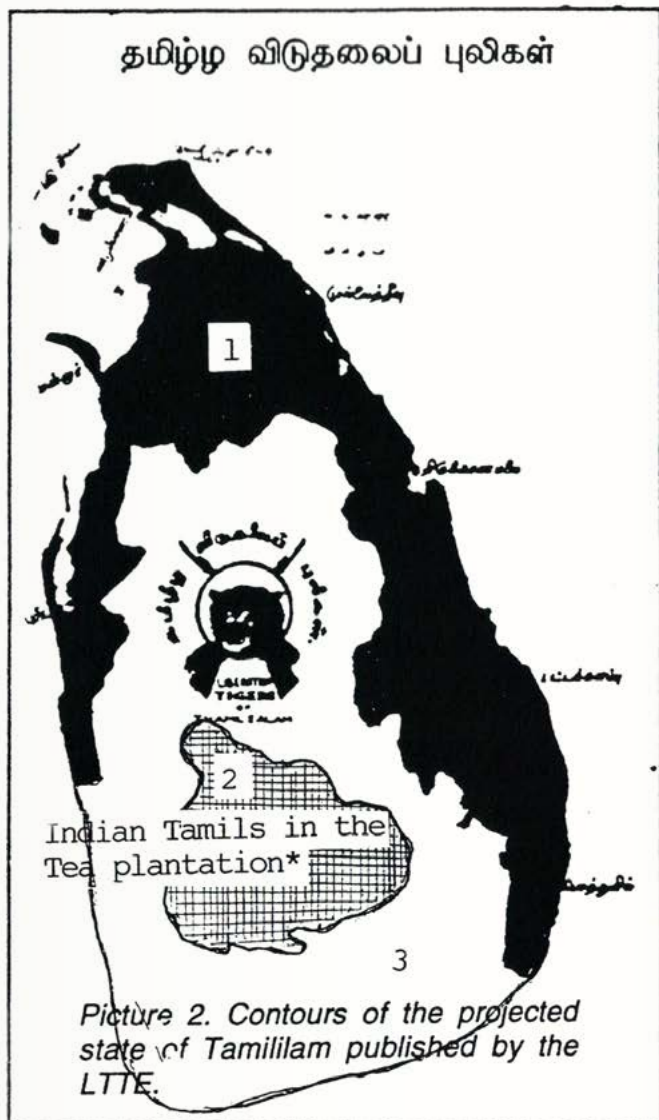


Swamy in Jaffna

belonging to some important castes especially in the coastal areas of the country will find their origins in South India. Therefore speaking about ethnicity in Sri Lanka is a controversial as well as a sensitive issue. The only basis as far as we could see for the Sinhalese and the Tamils to live together safeguarding their historical identity is living united. As I emphasised earlier, culture and religion could provide the basis for this unity. As the *Mahābhārata* says 'to the liberal minded person the entire earth is one family'.

Sri Lanka should never be divided into separate regions on the basis of ethnic identity. It should remain united and a unitary state. Moreover, a responsible government should never betray the rights of the majority or the minority. If they do so they inherit the curse of generations to come. We have only one solution to the present conflict. That is to arrive at a common and reasonable solution by all parties concerned giving up their petty political, social and ethnic differences and looking at the issue from purely human angle. The problem is not ethnic but political power. What is being referred to as a war is in fact a armed conflict between the state and a section of the Tamil speaking community.

I do not see anything wrong with a third party intervening to bring about a settlement to this problem in Sri Lanka. It is the intention that is important at this moment to see an end. A quarrel arose between two tribes, Koliyas and Sakyas, during the Buddha's time with regards to the waters of a boundary river. They were about to start a war. At this point Buddha intervened and admonished 'the two parties to live without hate. This is a clear example from the Buddha's life to



*inserted by the author

1. Sri Lankan Tamils
2. Indian Tamils
3. Majority Sinhalese

show that on occasions like this intervention is important. Let the two parties concern in Sri Lanka take this as a model.

Finally it must be emphasised over and over again that the undesirable and meaningless conflict between the two ethnic groups must be stopped. Buddha said:

Jayam veram pasavati
Dukkham seti parajito
Upasanto sukham seti
Hitva jayaparajayam (Dhammapada

201)

Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in pain. Happily the peaceful live, giving up victory and defeat.

Let us hope that we, the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka, will soon be able to say 'happily do we live' – *susukham vata jivama*.

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THE LIONS AND TIGERS

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