

The Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: A Historical Overview on the Sinhalese and Tamils Relations and Conflicts in the British Colonial Administration

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[**Abstract** : Sri Lanka perviously known, as Ceylon one of the western colonization's victim in the current world. The British, which have ruled the beautiful island more than one hundred and fifty years pioneers of the present of the ethnic problem. It would not be silly or exaggerating to draw such a frank conclusion. This academic discussion by pointing developments of the ethnic relations and conflict during the British administration period, attempts to establish a theory that relation between the different ethnic groups were, only deteriorated after British intrigue to damage smooth relations for their political survival.]

Introduction

Sri Lanka formerly known, as Ceylon is a plural society. People groups are distinguished from one another on ethnic, religious and linguistic grounds. In such a heterogeneous society, the Sinhalese and the Tamils successfully maintained good relations with each other. Although there were wars between the Sinhalese and the Tamil who came from Chola kingdom of South India particularly during the 10th and 14th centuries, the common people of the both groups lived as peacefully as they could without a conflict.¹ Both communities moved and settled each other's predominant areas and lived with them maintaining communal harmony. During the period when the two ethnic groups lived together smoothly, as friendly neighbours, there were a large number of intermarriages that took place between them.² These practices also became reasonably common during the regime of the kings of the Kandyan kingdom³ However, these positive social relations, based on good neighbourly feelings and a strong spirit of 'live and let live' as at the initial stage, suffered a severe setback under the British colonization, which added much to the division and conflict between the two ethnic groups. This academic discussion would attempt to develop the theory that worsening relations between the Sinhalese and Tamils, which is the form known to us today is mainly a result of the British conspiracy to administer the country in accordance with their own will and without hearing the voice of the common people.

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The British Colonial Administration: A Road to the Ethnic Conflict

It is not an exaggeration to say that relation between the different ethnic groups worsened only after the British interfered in the island's politics. The Portuguese and the Dutch, who ruled the country before the British, primary interest were trade. They concentrated their resources only on maintaining secure control of strategic maritime points on the coastline of the island. In other words, the Portuguese and Dutch neither introduced any significant policy that opened the way to bring the Ceylon's northern province under the rest of their region nor attempted to divide the local people on cleavages on the basis of gender and class. However, after the British gained complete control of the island in 1833, following the recommendations of the Colebrooke - Cameron commissions of 1831, things began to change. The British issued a package of administrative unification reforms, which were widely believed by the Sri Lankan people to be the beginning of a more liberal form of government than that which had ever prevailed before 1833. By introducing the reforms, the British brought the sharply divided island under the highly centralized unitary state. Although the different ethnic groups had lived peacefully during the Portuguese and Dutch administration, they never expressed a strong desire to bring the various divided regions under a unified system. They did not desire a unified system due to a vast degree of internal differentiations and historical backgrounds. Actually, before the western colonialists, when the Portuguese arrived on the shores of Ceylon in 1505 three regional sovereignties existed in the country. The Tamils dominated in the Jaffna Kingdom, centred on Jaffna and Sinhalese monarchs ruled the two other kingdoms, which were based in the centred and southern parts of the island. The Portuguese and Dutch did not bring the island under a single centralized power. The British brought different ethnic groups under a uniform system for the very first time in the island's recorded history. This, in fact was a principal root of the vast political problems in the second half of the twentieth century.^{iv}

Britain's decision to unify the island was not without their own interests. Firstly, to weaken divided regions's national uprising against the colonial masters. At certain times, there have been spate of anti-colonial uprisings: during the nineteenth century in Latin America, and during the twentieth century in Africa and Asia. These nationalist uprising's major aim was to create broad based mass movement that would encourage the struggle to undermine colonial administration established by the colonial state.^v The British in the case of Sri Lanka made no error in evaluating the situation. They correctly understood the consequences of ruling the Sinhala and Tamil nations separately. Secondly, to exploit the island, the British believed that their purpose of exploitation could be achieved under the unified administration rather than ruling in the island in a divided manner. These were Britain's real reasons hidden under the pretence of

administrative unification. The British administration successfully unified ethnically, culturally and religiously sharply divided groups under a single administration. As far as the Sinhalese were concerned, the unification of the island was a major breakthrough in their attempt to bring the Jaffna kingdom under the control. However, the Tamils saw unification as leading towards a life of oppression firstly under the British, and also under the Sinhalese in a modern Sri Lanka.

In the mean time, the Colonial Office favoured kind of political representations on the grounds of administrative expediency as a response to local demands, which were brought about by the Sinhalese and Tamil elites. And they chose to organize political representation on a racial basis.^{vi} That is to say the British decided to form unified Common Administration based of racial grounds to make sure the Colebrooke- Cameron commission's administrative functions. The body formed by the British government consisted of a Governor and Legislative and Executive Councils. Three unofficial members of the Legislative Council were to be natives nominated by the Governor, who chose one Low - Country Sinhala, one Burgher and one Tamil. There was no representation of the Upper - Country Sinhalese (Kandyans) and Muslims until 1889. The Lower Country Sinhalese and Tamils respectively represented Kandyans and Muslims. However, those of under represented communities felt that they were ignored in the politics. In order to balance all communities' representation, in 1889, Sir Arthur H.Gordon, Governor of island extended representation to the underrepresented. It meant that two more unofficial members were added to represent the Kandyan and Muslim communities. The point is that from the beginning, the British systematically organized political representation at a national level by introducing representation on a communal base. As Chattopadhyaya rightly mentioned "The British colonial government treated Ceylon as a unified country for the purpose of economic exploitation but divided it along communal lines to serve its political interests"^{vii}. That is to say they served their purpose in evaluating the sensitivity of ethnic feelings in under developed societies such as Ceylon.

Despite the British aim to split communal unity by introducing communal political representation on a national level, the Sinhalese and Tamils relations did not deteriorate in this initial period. With the disinclination of the Sinhalese to take the lead in formal political agitation, it was left to the Tamils to assume the initiative. Because of the energy of the Tamil elite and their enthusiasm in the political affairs, they played irreplaceable role in the political agitation against the British. The common Sinhalese people had praised Tamils political initiatives and these moves received greater attention in the Sinhalese controlled mass media. 'The intellectual and political activity noticeable among the Tamils' a local newspaper commented in 1889, 'is a favourable sign of the times... The intellectual activity of Tamils of the rising generation has reacted

to those of other communities.... In political matters it is gratifying to notice their activity....^{viii} Besides, leading Buddhist magazine of the day, the *Sarasavi Sandarasa*, in 1899 asserted notable Tamil political activist Ramanathan's contribution, 'not only looks after the welfare of his own constituents but also all matters connected with various interests on the island.... It might well be said, judging from the active part he has taken, and the amount of time and labour he has devoted to questions in Council affecting the Sinhalese alone, that he was their representative... The Buddhists owe Mr. Ramanathan a deep debt of gratitude....^{ix} These evidences depict that the Tamil elite had admirably served in the Legislative Council for the common interest of both Sinhalese and Tamils. Tamil leadership did not campaign for the communal demands. Significantly, the Tamil leaders such as Ramanathan and his brother Arunachchlam played remarkable roles. None of the Sinhalese representatives in the last quarter of the nineteenth century reflected the intellectual dynamism, independence of outlook and political maturity of those Tamil leaders. The Tamil - Sinhalese elite unity in the political affairs really went against continuation of colonial administration. Moreover, the Tamil representative's independent line of thinking and their active participation in the national politics targeted more reform demands of Ceylonese. All this Tamil activism however provoked Colonial Officers. A Senior official of colonial administration gave his expression of this attitude by commenting that 'the Tamils in Ceylon are the most intriguing section of the population'^x.

In fact, the Tamils were more educated than the Sinhalese. The Tamils had sufficient opportunity to pursue an education in English due to colonial policy to establish English medium missionary schools in northern part of island. The educated Tamils turned to their professions and served in the Colonial bureaucracy, particularly, the educated Tamils migrated to Sinhalese areas where clerical posts were available. In these areas there was no competition between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Moreover, the Tamil students had long been accustomed to going to India, particularly the Madras presidency, for their University education. While they studied they absorbed the political ideas. After their return to the island, they sought those of political ideas to match their own. However, the independent thinking of the Tamil leadership, which was somewhat based on the Indian political movements, were not contrary to the Sinhalese interests. Tamil political activity was rather, focused on uprooting the Colonial administration.

The important point is that despite the British' systematic attempts to disturb ethnic unity, relations between the different ethnic groups were far more cordial than in any other British dependency in the East.^{xi} That is to say at this stage in the island, ethnicity was not a divisive factor in the national politics. Particularly, Sinhalese - Tamil relations were not yet damaged as they were in later decades.

All these cordiality pushed Sinhalese and Tamil elite to discuss seriously to form a potential of a political movement with a genuine grassroots appeal. They aspired to form a political movement like their Indian counterpart, the Indian National Congress, which was playing a vital role in India in mobilizing people and battling against the colonial administration. ^{xii} The Ceylonese leaders desired to form more politically effective organizations than those that currently prevailed the political scene such as the Ceylon National Association, were finally satisfied with the formation of the Ceylon Reform League. The admirable development was that Sir Ponnampalam Arunachalam, leading Tamil voice succeeded in becoming the President of the League. The Sinhalese leaders unanimously recognized his choice without communal weight. And they together identified a common enemy deserving concerted attack. To make the success of this political struggle sure, the Tamil elite, who was the politically more mature group, were at the forefront of this movement. ^{xiii}

Later, Tamil and Sinhalese elite decided to launch more functional institute rather currently prevailing one: they formed Ceylon National Congress to boost their effort to win more political reforms and Sinhalese and Tamil inter-elite cooperation reached its peak when Arunachalam became the first President of the newly formed Ceylon National Congress. Together they aimed to gain more constitutional reforms and eventually gain their own self-government. During this period British decided to send William Manning, most masterminded British top officer as a Governor to the island to collapse Tamil - Sinhala unity. As British expected, differences began to develop between the two leadership concerning the Tamil share in a communally elected legislature. In fact, the British authorities were eager to see divided ethnic communities instead of united, because they believed that cordial relations between the different ethnic groups would pose a threat to the colonial administration in the island.

With the arrival of Sir William Manning in 1919, one of the most masterful British governors of the island, ethnicity became an important factor in the politics. He regarded the Sinhalese - Tamil elite allied Ceylon National Congress as an intolerable challenge to the British colonial administration. He closely followed those proceedings with a jaundiced eye, searching for at least one negative aspect of the Congress political structure. As he wished, Congress started to weaken mainly due to the communal line of thinking, and Manning plotted the Congress' potential points of weakness. ^{xiv} Manning clearly knew that the Ceylon Tamils were politically more sophisticated and articulate than the Sinhalese. Hence, he decided to undermine Tamil strength in the Legislative Council by introducing new reforms. A new mechanism of representation commonly referred as a "Manning Constitution" paved the way for the colonial rules to exploit the unity of Congress. The reforms' focus was on the Tamil representatives: Manning believed reduction of the Tamils voice in the Legislative Council would serve

two purposes. Firstly, the politically articulate group would be disabled, and secondly, the Tamils would complain against the Sinhalese over abundant representation.

According to Manning reforms, representation was organized as follows : Lower Country Sinhalese- 11, Tamils - 3, Burghers - 2, Kandyan Sinhalese - 2, Muslims - 1 and Indians - 1. It was well apparent that Tamil representation was sufficiently reduced in the new reforms. Tamils now thought that under the (British imposed) new constitution, they will not share equal rights with the Sinhalese and it would be a another stride against them by the British colonial rulers, who unified the Tamil region in 1833 with rest of the Sinhalese predominant region without prior consultation of Tamils - only for their capitalist exploitation. As a result , Tamil leaders demanded special representatives for the Tamils in the Western Province in order to prevent Sinhalese domination over Tamils . Some more to this background, the Sinhalese members went back on two pledges they had given the Tamils. First, two leaders of the Congress, James Peiris and E.J.Samarawickrema, supported the request of the Jaffna Association for adequate representation for the Tamils and for the lesser minorities in the legislature, provided these were not inconsistent with the territorial principal of representation. Specifically they gave a written undertaking in December 1918, Peiris as President of the Ceylon National Association and Samarawickrema as President of the Ceylon Reform League, supporting the request of the Jaffna Association for a special seat for the Tamils in the Western Province so long as the electorate remains territorial. On the basis of this pledge, Arunachalam successfully persuaded the Jaffna Association to back the proposed Ceylon National Congress. The pledge was broken, as in many other instances later in the century. In a letter to the , Sir William Manning, Governor of the time and founder of the communal conflict, Arunachalam stated: ' the sole reason for my withdrawing from the Congress was the subsequent breaking of the pledge'.^{xv} The Sinhalese leaders, however, dropped the Tamil demand for the special representative. The Sinhalese leaders believed such an additional representation would lead Tamil influence in the island politics.

As Governor Manning planned, the first elections of the reformed Legislative Council brought thirteen Sinhalese to territorial constituencies as compared to only three Tamils. This was clearly unequal representation of the Tamils. In the old Legislative Council there had been a near equality in representation for both the Sinhalese and Tamil unofficial members. Soon after the new Legislative Council met, the Tamils representation in the Council voiced their opinion about the injustice and demanded for the restoration of the proportion of Tamil to Sinhalese representatives that prevailed before 1920, But neither Manning nor the Sinhalese leaders were receptive to the Tamils campaigns. Actually, Manning was really satisfied with the proceedings of the Ceylon politics. The new political atmosphere conveniently assisted the British authorities in

establishing the stability of their administration. The principal success of Manning intrigue was break-up of Ceylon National Congress , which was regarded as a united vehicle for the independence struggle against the British. As the Ceylon National Congress increasingly ruptured along ethnic lines in 1922, members of the Tamil elite had stated turning towards their own political platform by establishing *Tamil Mahajana Saba* (literally means Tamil Association) which marked the beginning of Sinhalese - Tamil elite rivalry , giving pre-eminence to ethnicity. ^{xvi}

The main victims of Manning's reform were the Tamils and the prime beneficiary of the new changes in the political scene was Manning. While he curtailed the Tamil's equal rights on the political stage, he systematically initiated all the necessary arrangements to worsen unity among the Sinhalese and Tamils. After the lost of equal representation of Tamils in the Legislative Council, they naturally felt that the mainstream political scene was deliberately ignoring them. Because of increasing political isolation, the Tamils had by now begun to think of themselves as a minority community, and Arunachalam himself was inclined to share this same viewpoint.

British Governor Manning purposefully attempted to split communal harmony, so of course he made no effort to restore Sinhalese - Tamil relations. Anyhow, in mid-November 1921, two conferences were held in a desperate attempt at reconciliation between the Sinhalese and Tamil leadership. But these conferences did not bring any tangible result to any problems because of one crucial issue that the Tamils demanded, which was having a special seat in the Western Province. The Tamils believed that this sort of special arrangement would fulfil their grievances. Manning did not try to address this issue peacefully. Indeed, his interference and neutral mediation would have helped to persuade Sinhalese leaders to agree on the Tamils demand, but his political instincts were as sharp as ever, and he wished to keep this issue alive for the political profit. At the same time, he publicly expressed his support for the Tamils to have special representation in the Western Province. ^{xvii} In fact, the British authorities were not genuinely inclined to find an acceptable political solution to the existing problem, particularly the Sinhalese - Tamil confrontations. Their unwillingness was intentional. While they succeeded in splitting Ceylon National Congress under the pretext of sympathizing with the Kandyan Sinhalese, who thought that they were under represented in the national level they seriously collapsed the harmony among the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders who had initiated the program to oust the colonial administration before Manning had arrived on the island.

In the end of the 1920's the British Colonial Office appointed Donoughmore as Chairman to work as a Special Commission on constitutional reform. With the arrival of the Commission , the question of the suffrage received higher attention in the island's

political scene. The British now regarded communalism in politics as retrogressive. They also preferred a constitution based broadly on the Westminster pattern, which would prevent the issue of sectional representation. The Sinhalese people tended to support a widening of the franchise of the basis of 'one person one vote', the system the British favored. Very obviously, the Tamils believed that this system would pave the way for the Sinhalese majority to act out their will, and Sinhalese interests would be secured. It is not surprising that the Tamils saw such a system as discriminatory. Hence, the Tamil elite opposed universal suffrage based upon territorial lines.^{xviii} They continually campaigned for an electoral system, which would possibly protect the rights of the minorities. Moreover, they demanded a certain kind of federal system based on communal representation.^{xix}

During negotiations with the Donoughmore Commission concerning the constitution the Tamils firmly stood for a position which differentiated their race and culture. They believed that they were a minority, thus they wanted a guarantee, which would ensure their rights. In contrast, the Sinhalese, as the majority were in the position to back any system, which was fundamentally much more close to the modern state characteristics such as homogeneity, equality of voting rights, the universal franchise and the rights of the individual regardless of race or religion.

After a series of negotiations and discussions with the Ceylonese leaders both majority and minority, Donoughmore released his report in 1930. This report categorically rejected the Ceylon National Congress' demand for a fully responsible self-governing body and conceded a very substantial measure of responsibilities to the colonial politicians. With respect to the minorities' demand for communal representation, the report firmly denied the introduction of a communal electoral system, which was what the minorities favored. National unity was the strongest factor leading towards the rejection of a system of communal representation. Donoughmore's most significant recommendation was to widen the franchise to extend to all males over twenty-one and females over thirty. It is an important to point out that under the constitution of 1923-4 only 4 percent of the population had the right to vote. Moreover, Sri Lanka became the first British colony in Asia- and indeed the first Asian country to enjoy the benefits of the universal suffrage.

There were mixed responses to the report. The Sinhalese leaders concern was focused mainly on keeping the franchise from being extended to the immigrant Indian plantation workers. Sinhalese politicians believed that this would pave the way for the Tamils to dominate and add to Indian interference among the island's politics. On the other hand, minorities expressed their contempt for the report on account of its refusal to accept communal electorates. Minority opinion complained that while a significant measure of political power had been transferred to the Ceylonese in general, the con-

clusion of the report failed to provide safeguards for protecting the interest of the minorities. Furthermore, the minorities undoubtedly believed that universal suffrage would be just as unpalatable as having the Sinhalese in political control. The minorities therefore took a stand against it, because universal suffrage would result not only in the democratization of the electorates but it would also guarantee the permanent Sinhalese political hegemony.^{xx} Sir Ponnampalm Ramanathan, a notable spokesman of the Tamil interests spoke out strongly against the Donoughmore Commission Report on behalf of Tamils. He made a well-published visit to Whitehall, seeking to persuade the Colonial Office to reject the report's proposals. However, the British did not respond in favour to these complaints. If the British would have rightly calculated the situation, and predicted the future consequences, the island would not have experienced ethnic conflicts in the form that we see them today. It seems they did not like to address these problems and they were optimistic of a healthy political environment under the new reforms. But, the dire predictions of minority politicians proved all too accurate. The Board of Ministers (a kind of pre-independence shadow cabinet) formed after the 1936 elections were composed of all Sinhalese.^{xxi} The minorities, particularly the Tamils were disappointed with the proceedings of the Ceylonese political favouritism toward the Sinhalese interests. Due to implementations of the Donoughmore report, Tamils seriously stated to think along their 'own political line'. Not surprisingly, the Tamils Jaffna Youth League, whom some regard as the forerunners of post-independence militant movement, they convinced the Tamil people not to vote in the 1931 elections.^{xxii} They did so in order to show their frustration toward the Sinhalese agenda and show their separation and dis-co-operation with the large political agenda.

In 1944, the Tamils formed the first exclusively Tamil political party of Sri Lanka, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress. They elected G.G.Ponnambalam, a consummate orator, as leader of their party. The Soulbery Constitutional Commission arrived in 1944 in an attempt to cure the previous constitution of its negative aspects and to take the next step toward the self-government of the Ceylonese. The Ponnambalam's Congress had the support of the majority of the Ceylon Tamils and demanded a 'fifty - fifty' legislative system giving the Sinhala half of the seats and reserving the rest for minorities.^{xxiii} Ponnambalam thought that it would ensure what he called 'balanced representation' in the Legislative Council.^{xxiv} Nevertheless, the British refused to endorse balanced representation. They dismissed those proposals as being too complicated and unworkable, being a mixture of both territorial and communal representation^{xxv}. Colonial rulers' failure to listen to the Tamil voice during this period added greatly to the growth a Sinhalese Tamil conflicts which have mounted upon the present level. It is not an exaggeration to record that the British deliberately ignored the Tamil's cry and they failed to understand the consequences of their refusal to assist the Tamils. However, to

mitigate Tamils who were isolated by the colonial administration, the British worked out a complex scheme of weighted representation for the minorities where by, they claimed , ' of the 95 elected seats (in the post - independence Parliament) , 58 would go to Sinhalese candidates. 15 to the Ceylon Tamils, 14 to the Indian Tamils, and 8 to the Muslims. There were in addition 6 nominated seats for minority representation totalling 43 minority seats in a House of 101.^{xxxv} They also incorporated an important safeguard for the minorities in Section 29(2) of the Constitution, which stipulated that Parliament could not enact discriminatory legislation against a particular ethnic or religious group. Moreover, the British were optimistic that the Sinhalese Prime Minister would indeed choose to appointed persons from among the non - Sinhalese groups to the nominated seats in Parliament, and would offer ministerial portfolios to them, if need be. ^{xxxvi} Sadly, the predictions of the British Soulbury Commissions concerning what is generally referred to , as the ' minorities safeguards' were completely faded away.

In Sri Lanka, the British had already decided to transfer power to the politician of their choice. That is to say they very carefully picked upper class, rightwing politicians who would collaborate with them. In this regard they made an absolute choice; a Sinhalese and loyal collaborator named Don Stephen Senanayake ^{xxxvii} Upon assuming power , the Senenayake's government acted, and successfully passed in Parliament, two pieces of legislation. The first one was the Citizenship Act (1948), and the second was the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act (1949). Due to these unfair political decisions made in the Soulbury Constitution, which the British viewed as minority safeguards, the entire ' Indian Tamil' population, who laboured in the tea and rubber plantations , and were estimated to number in excess of one million at that time, lost their citizenship. The Sri Lankan Tamils feared that some day in the future the same thing would happen to them.^{xxxix} Moreover , Chelvanayakam, founder of the Traditional Tamil Homeland concept, made this accurate assessment of D.S.Senanayeke's United National Party: " The UNP is nothing more than a congregation of arch-communalists whose past antics and present - day activities tend to disturb the harmonious relations that have existed among the different communities in the island." ^{xxx} As the Tamils presumed , post - colonial development of Sri Lnaka's polity has declined , as the Tamils feared that it would. Tamils now found themselves even more isolated.

Conclusion

As generally accepted, the erosion of the Sinhalese - Tamil positive relationship is a product of modern politics. But the root of this conflict goes back to the British colonial period. Admittedly, before the British entered to the island, there was conflict. The point is this conflict was actually dynastic wars between opposed kings , and not between the members of the different ethnic groups.^{xxxi} There is no recorded history of wars involving the Sinhalese and Tamil common people. In fact , the conflicts in the form known to

us today are a recently manufactured product a truly twentieth - century phenomenon.^{xviii} That is to say the British colonial policy of divide and rule sowed the seed of renewed tensions between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities after independence.^{xviii} It might be exaggerated if we put all the blame on the British side for the origin of the ethnic conflict . But if one followed the pre-independent political development of Sri Lanka , they would draw similar conclusions.

Communalism is a modern trend in Sri Lanka. This is a result of the British colonial administration. Britain started the snowball of communalism rolling by imposing the system of electoral representation in Sri Lanka. They had all the reasons to introduce this system. Obviously, to cause differences between the different ethnic group were a principal purpose. However , they later found this sort of the representation as retrogressive, and preferred a constitution based broadly on the Western pattern which could ignore this issue of sectional representation. However, the new system did not assuage communalism among the country's common people. In fact, the British having introduced the Western style constitution have largely increased communal and sectional politics in this violence - torn country.

Because of the situation regarding elections of the present day to compete country's highest political sovereignty institute, ruling classes in Sri Lanka are afraid and hesitate to address ethnic problem. This has well proved when present government withdrew its political package to the ethnic conflict in the first week of August 2000. That is to say Sinhalese political of politicians survival largely depends on the Sinhalese votes. Average politicians simply believed that an honourable solution to the ethnic problem in a way acceptable to the Tamils, who are victims of the conflict, would go against the majority interests , and increase their chances of loosing Sinhalese vote. This is a reality in Sri Lanka's political history since it gained so - called " independence" fifty years ago.

Very broadly speaking we have argued that there was harmony between the different ethnic groups before the western colonization in Ceylon. This was damaged only after the Britain's intrusion of the island. Therefore, they cannot easily escape from the responsibility of having founded the ethnic problem, which was before and still is an unresolved burning question since they transferred power to the local elite in 1948.

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- ii. N.D.Wijesekara, *The People of Ceylon* (Colombo . Gunasena 1965)p.p.XX-XXI
- iii. Ibid
- iv. Niddhani. "The Sri Lankan Ethnic Problem and the British Policies (in Tamil Language) *Vidivu* (Dawn in English) (April 1993) pp. 22-29
- v. Crawford Young , *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1976) pp.70-72