



SOUTH INDIAN HISTORY CONGRESS

Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress
Journal of the South Indian History Congress since 1981
ISSN No.: 2229-3671
UGC CARE Listed Journal

Ethnic Crisis and Plight of Srilankan Tamils

Author(s): Dr. G.M. Sunder Singh

Source: Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress 36(2016), pp. 193-196

Stable URL: http://journal.southindianhistorycongress.org/journals/articles/2016/SIHC_2016_V36_045.pdf

Published By: South Indian History Congress

© 2022 South Indian History Congress. All rights reserved.

ETHNIC CRISIS AND PLIGHT OF SRILANKAN TAMILS

Dr. G.M. SUNDER SINGH

This research paper is an attempt to highlight the Ethnic crisis and plight of Srilankan Tamils. The Island of Srilanka consist of two nations; the Tamil nation and the Sinhala nation. From the dawn of history the Tamils in Ceylon had their own kingdom and unique civilization. The Tamils were the original inhabitants of the land. The Independent sovereign state of Tamil lost its freedom in 1619, when they were conquered by Portuguese. Then the Dutch Army took over the reign from the Portuguese in 1638, then the British came. The entire island of Srilanka was brought under the rule of British in 1796. On 4th February 1948 the British gave independence to Srilanka. But the authority to rule was vested with the Sinhalese, which ultimately resulted in subjugating the Tamil people as second class citizens. The mass obnoxious legislation ever enacted in any democracy was made by the Sinhalese government to disfranchise one million Tamils of Indian origin as stateless people. In 1956 the Srilankan government made Sinhala as the only official language throughout the island. Buddhism was the state religion pushing the Hindus, Christians and Muslims to second class status. Due to this systematic discrimination, the Tamils started peaceful agitation under the dynamic leadership of the great Tamil leader SJV Selvanayagam who was also called as Thanthai selva as well as Eelam Gandhi. But the Srilankan racist Government unleashed violent oppression by the police and the military against the peaceful demonstrators. Many Tamils lost their lives. In 1957 a pact was entered between Bandaranaike, the head of the Srilankan government and the Tamil leader Selvanayagam to address the genuine demands of Tamils. But it was unilaterally abrogated by the srilankan government. In 1965 Senanayake the head of the srilankan government entered into another

agreement with Selvanayagam which was later torn into pieces and thrown down into the dustbin of history. Due to die hard racism Tamils lost their basic rights. Cultural genocide against Tamils started. Places of worship of Tamils, temples and churches were desecrated and ruined by the Sinhalese thugs with the help of the police and army violating human rights. State aided colonization took place. The Sinhala government forcefully appropriated land in the Tamil homelands, driving out the Tamils from the villages and these lands were given to Sinhala settlers. Extra judicial killings, plunder, rape and disappearance of Tamils by the srilankan police became the order of the day. Due to those atrocities, Tamils determined to have their separate nation.

VATTUKOTTAI RESOLUTION

All the Tamil front organization participated in the most Historic national convention of Tamil united Liberation Front in pannakam on 14th day of May 1976. The convention declared that the Tamils of Ceylon were a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese and decided to the setting up of a free sovereign, secular and socialist state of Tamil country. Their resolution became the Magna Carta of Tamil nation. In 1977 general election to Srilankan parliament became more or less a referendum for the Tamil people in which they gave their verdict in total for a separate sovereign Tamil nation. The Srilankan government intensified its brutal military attacks. The famous Jaffna Library which contained the invaluable treasures of Tamil Literature and culture were burnt to ashes in 1981. Two years later in 1983 thousands of Tamils were killed. The most gruesome killing took place in Velikadai prison where 58 Tamils were slaughtered .In this background the younger generation of Tamils resorted to armed struggle in the 1970s

spearheaded by Tamil militant organization. Among them LTTE was prominent.

THIMBUTALKS -1985

In the month of July 1985 talks were held between Srilankan government and Tamil groups at Thimpu, in Bhutan mediated by the Indian Government. The Tamil groups emphasized that any meaningful solution to the Tamil nation question must be based on recognition of Tamils as a distinct nation, recognition of the right to citizenship of all Tamils. The Srilankan government did not agree to these cardinal principles of the Tamil groups. So talks failed. The Srilankan government launched its brutal offensive against Tamils in 1995. A shocking tragedy took place. 168 innocent tamils including women and children who took shelter inside St. Peter's church at Navaly were mercilessly killed in cold blood by Bombardment of Srilankan air force. Fifty thousand Tamils from Jaffna were uprooted from their traditional homes. They had to flee to the jungles and other areas. The then Pope John Paul II appealed to the international community to provide solace to erase the tears of the tamils. The then security general of UN Boutros Ghali made a similar appeal. To protect the honour and dignity of tamils the militant organizations fought the battle with such a valour and courage and determination, the world ever witnessed and defeated the numerically superior forces of Srilanka. The defense lines and army camps did fall one after another. The militant organization defeated the Sinhalese army and captured the elephant pass in 2001. From the position of strength the LTTE ultimately declared ceasefire on the eve of Christmas on 24th December 2001 for 30 days and again it was extended upto 24th January 2002.

PEACE TALKS

Due to the intervention of European countries, the Srilankan government had to respond and declare ceasefire on their part.

Two rounds of peace talks in Thailand and third round in Norway were held in 2002. The president of Srilanka Chandrika Kumaratunga sabotaged the peace process in 2003. The blood thirsty Mahinda Rajapakse became the president of Srilanka in November 2005. On 8th August 2006, 17 Tamil youths who worked as volunteers in Tsunami Rehabilitation centre of a French NGO were shot dead by Srilankan army. The crime was exposed by The Australian Government to the world. The most gruesome cruel massacre which shocked the hearts and minds of the international community was the dastardly bombing of the Chenchoelai orphanage on 14-8-2006 in which 61 girl children were grievously wounded. Freedom of expression was totally curtailed. Media persons, particularly foreign media, the international NGOs even the ICRC were not at all permitted to visit any of the conflict areas. The renowned journalist Tarakhi Sivaraman was shot dead in broad day light on 28th April 2005 in a busy street of Colombo by Srilankan army intelligence. The editor of 'Sunday Leader' Lasantha Wickramatunge, a renowned Sinhalese journalist who exposed the genocide of Tamils was murdered by Srilankan forces. Four members of Parliament, democratically elected by them were shot dead at point blank range by the Srilankan army in broad day light. The Srilankan government engineered its armed forces to commit all atrocious crimes, particularly against women folk. Gang raps and killings were routine for them. Further more the Srilankan air forces dropped chemical bombs and bombs banned by Geneva convention. But the ceasefire agreement was deliberately thrown to winds by the Srilankan governments with a sinister diabolical design to decimate the Tamil race. The only sin was being born as Tamils. Without an iota of mercy, the Srilankan air forces attacked them by strafing. The wounded Tamil women, children and the men were lying under the trees. They slowly perished without medical help. The chairman of Human Rights Council,

Madam Louise Arbour was not permitted by the Srilankan government to visit the affected tamil areas. Many democratic countries appealed to Srilankan Government to stop the war and bring about ceasefire. All these appeals fell on deaf ears. The tamils in Tamilnadu were terribly agitated and shocked over the holocaust of Tamils in Srilanka. A brave tamil youth, Muthukumar committed self-immolation on 29th January 2009. On 6th February 2009 when the world saw the glimpses of dawn by 6.30 am at Seremban in Malaysia. One brave tamil youth Raja embraced the dusk of death through the flames of fire.

CRIME OF GENOCIDE

It is an undeniable proven fact that the srilankan government of Mahinda Rajapakse has committed the unforgivable crime of genocide of hundreds of thousands of innocent tamils, particularly women, children and elderly men. The Srilankan soldiers dastardly ripped open the abdomen of pregenant women with bayonets. They did not stop there, they went on to sever the foetus in the abdomen and thrashed them in mud. More than 3,30000 tamils were locked in no-fire zones, where they did not receive adequate food and essentials. The tamil men and youth were tortured and shot dead by the Srilankan army. Tamil girls and women were separated from their families, raped and killed. All the human rights activists and freedom loving people all over the world were shocked about the terrible massacre of tamils in that Island.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Germany and other 16 countries sent a letter on 19th May 2009 to the Human Rights Council to convene a immediate meeting to investigate Human rights violations by Srilankan government .To add insult to the injury the Srilankan government prepared a resolution commending its role in the war operations and managed to adopt the resolution in the Human

Rights Council with unjustifiable assistance of countries like Cuba, Bolivia and 27 countries supported the resolution in favour of srilanka. 12 countries opposed. The three member panel of the UNO has recommended that the Human rights council should be invited to reconsider its may 2009 special session resolution regarding Srilanka in light of this report. Already the Dublin Tribunal at the initiative of left democratic forces in January 2010 has recommended to investigate the war crimes of the Srilankan governments against the tamils . The conscience of the international community was shaken when the gruesome massacre of tamils was exposed and proved with unassailable evidence of video footage of channel 4, a London television. Therefore the Human rights council of united Nations in Geneva adopted a resolution in March 2014,urging the office of the High commissioner of Human rights to undertake a comprehensive investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and related crimes committed by the Srilankan government. Next the united Nation Human rights Commission has appointed a three member UN panel in june 2014 to implement the march 2014 resolution of Human rights council in Srilanka. The three members UN panel on Srilanka consist of Martti Ahtisaari, former president of finland and UN special envoy for Kosovo, who was involved in the process that led to the creation of a US-baked state in Kosovo; silvia Cartwright, former Newzeland governor-general and High-court judge, who was a member of the Cambodia tribunal on Khmer Rouge war crimes; Asma Jahangir,a former president of Pakistans Human Right commission who has also been a UN special Rapporteur. But, Srilanka government has opposed the UN resolutions and refused to issue Visas for the members of the probe team to visit Srilanka. When most of the countries in the world which are concerned about the terrific tragedy of Human rights violations and massacre

of tamils in Srilanka have decided to investigate the truth. Srilankan government has decided to close the doors of justice permanently, making all attempts to mislead the international community, burying the facts under thousand fathoms deep.

As on date the situation in the North and east of Srilanka, the traditional home land of tamils is worsening. The areas have become more or less a concentration camp under the control of Srilankan army. The traditional Tamil areas have been forcefully colonized by Sinhala settlements. Large numbers of innocent Tamils have disappeared. Most of them are in torture camps and prisons. Army is posted in every street. Tamil women folk are subjected to all sorts of cruelty. All the above serious issue should be addressed by the international community. Now heart breaking terrible genocide of hundreds of thousands of tamils in Srilanka has happened. Mahinda Rajapakse and his brothers and his men who have committed the most barbarous genocide against tamils who

have caused human catastrophe to be tried in international court. They should be tried. Human rights activists, freedom loving democracies who cherish human rights should take earnest steps to see the united nations establishing international court to try the Head of state of Srilanka for the crime of Genocide against tamils. As many nationalites fought for self-determination and succeeded through Referendum of the people. When the right of self-determination is recognized as a basic right of nationality as per Geneva Convention the tamils must live in their homeland in a justifiable manner. That could be the only justifiable permanent solution. At present the armed forces are camped in tamil areas. The internally displaced persons who are still kept in captivity in government run camps. International aid agencies, NGOs, international committee of red cross are not allowed of free access into the affected areas. Tamil youths are detained in prisons camps. Thus the tamil people are suffering from ethnic crisis in Srilanka.

REFERENCE

1. VAIKO, Key Note address of Penang International Tamil Conference, Penang, Malaysia, 7-9-2014, Thayagam, Chennai.
2. A.K. Manoharan, Srilanka-Ethnic Conflict and peace intervention-A Historical perspective, 1948-2007, madras.
3. Pazha Nedumaran, Prabhakaran-Tamil Elutchin Vadivam, Chennai, 2012.
4. Vaiko, I accuse, Thayagam, Chennai, 2014.
5. Dr. Murugar Gunasingham, Tamils in Srilanka- a Comprehensive History, Sydney, 2010.
6. Dinathanthi, Ilankai Tamilar Varalaru, Chennai, 2014.
7. Sangoli, Mdmk party official organ, Chennai, dated 16-8-2006.
8. S. Arasarithnam, Ceylon and the Dutch 1600-1800: external influences and internal change in early modern srilanka, Great Britain, 1996.
9. R.G. Anthonisz, The Dutch in Ceylon: An account of their early visit to the island, New Delhi, 2003.
10. C. Collins, Public administration in Ceylon, London 1951.
11. De silvia, History of Ceylon, srilanka, 1973.
12. K. Sivathamby, Tamil Nationalism and social conflicts-an effort to understand current ethnics crisis, Jaffna, 1985.
13. G. Iriyagolla, Tamil Claims to land: fact and fiction, Colombo, 1985.
14. K. Kailasapathy, Cultural and linguistics consciousness of the tamil community in Ethnicity and social changes in srilanka, Colombo, 1985.
15. Gnanaprakasara, a critical history of Jaffna the tamil era, New delhi, 2003.