Professor Sinnappa Arasaratnam recently passed away in Australia. A versatile academic, Professor Arasaratnam retired a few years ago from the University of New England, Armedale, Australia as Professor of History. One of the brightest historians produced by the University of Ceylon, Professor Arasaratnam's career reflected the vicissitudes of ethnic politics in post- colonial Sri Lanka. He migrated to Malaysia in the sixties to accept a teaching position at the University of Malaya. From there he went to Australia to accept a Chair in History at the University of New England.

*The following essay was published in 1967 in the anthology, **India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity**, edited by Philip Mason and published by the Oxford University Press. Professor Arasaratnam was a member of the Sri Lankan Tamil intelligentsia who experienced the majoritarian drift of Sri Lanka's post-colonial politics, yet hoped for reconciliation among majority and minority communities. In a rare spirit of intellectual candour and guarded optimism, he wrote:*

"The minorities have felt the heavy hand of Sinhalese power and have learnt to moderate their demands. They can now distinguish between privileges and rights and will learn to live without built-in advantages. They now realize that, in a democratic state, the dominance of the interests of the majority community must be accepted. It is hoped that these moderating factors will operate on all groups in the island and that they will thus live together with greater mutual tolerance than they have recently shown".

We reproduce the following essay as a tribute to Professor Sinnappa Arasaratnam. Readers may find some of its ideas dated; nevertherless, it as a whole represents the way in which the terms of the debate on ethnicity were defined in the mid sixties.

NATIONALISM, COMMUNALISM, AND NATIONAL UNITY IN CEYLON

S. Arasaratnam

On account of its geographic location, the island of Ceylon has been, over the ages, the recipient of diverse strands of social and cultural influences from many parts of the world. It has a continuous record of migrations, invasions, and settlements, all of which have determined the population as it is today with its many cultural patterns and social variations. Its proximity to India has meant that the major currents of influence and impact have proceeded from the subcontinent to whose broad cultural area Ceylon may be said to belong. Both the main ethnic constituents of its population and its classical culture have an Indian provenance. Its position as an island in the middle of the Indian Ocean and on the highway of sea-traffic from East to West has enabled other and more cosmopolitan elements to enter the cultural cauldron. From very early times there were contacts with the Mediterranean world, Western Asia, and South-East Asia, and in the modern period influences from Western Europe have come in quite extensively. In all these cases, social and cultural influences have resulted from commercial relations or imperial conquest.

In this way, through a recorded history of two and a half millennia, the island has been subject to intermittent doses of external influence -ethnic and linguistic, religious and social. The legacy of all these influences has been a country with a plurality of languages, religions, and way of life, with many culturally separated groups of people alienated and, to some extent, isolated from each other. The diverse origins and character of external influences, the quick succession in which they came, and the intensity of their impact have rendered it difficult to assimilate them all into a coherent whole. Thus it was that many cultural pockets grew into existence, preserved their identity in an alien environment and could not be absorbed by elements that were already there.[1]

Today these many groups and subgroups exist in varying degrees of strength and are of great importance to the problem of national unity. The Sinhalese constitute about 70 per cent of the population of the island, occupying the western and southern coasts, the central highlands and north-central plains and parts of the eastern plains. They speak a language which belongs to the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Over 90 per cent of them profess the Buddhist faith. The Sinhalese community is again subdivided into those of the low country and those of the up country, the former constituting 62 per cent of the total Sinhalese population and the latter 38 per cent. The basis of the division is geographic, but certain historical circumstances give it a cultural force. The Sinhalese of the low country have been exposed for longer periods to external, especially Western, influences which have considerably changed their ways of life and value systems, which those of the interior are more traditional and less affected by the process of modernization.

The Tamils of Ceylon are another distinct community settled in the northern parts of the island and along the eastern seaboard, and constitute 11 per cent of the total population. The community

referred to as the Indian Tamils are a more recent group of immigrants who came from the mid-nineteenth century onwards to work in the plantations. They are separated both geographically and socially from the Ceylon Tamils and also constitute some 11 per cent of the population. They live mainly in the upper reaches of the hills and are to some degree isolated from the rest of the population. Both these groups speak the Tamil language, which belongs to the Dravidian family of languages, and are predominantly of the Hindu religion.

The Ceylon Moor community, made up of Islamic settlers in the island, are scattered all over the country with a few concentrations on the east coast and certain districts of the west. They constitute about 7 per cent of the population and use an Arabized Tamil as their native language. Eurasians, Burghers (descendants of Dutch settlers), and Malays constitute tiny groups of under 1 per cent and exist mainly as urban communities. Four major religions of the world have struck root in the island and have adherents in the following proportions: Buddhism, 64 per cent; Hinduism, 20 per cent; Christianity, 9 per cent; and Islam, 7 per cent.

With the beginning of modern political activity, these social differences asserted themselves in strength. The first forms of political organization were those that aimed to bring together specific communities in pursuit of their particular interest. The biggest attempt at nationalist politics, the Ceylon National Congress, did not remain national for long. Within two years after its formation in 1919, the Tamils walked out of it to form their own association. Every projected reform of the Constitution became a tug-of-war between communities to gain a greater voice in representative councils.[2] Mutual suspicion and fear were very great. As the colonial Government was persuaded to concede power gradually, Ceylonese politicians contended among themselves over the share that communal groups would receive. It was in an attempt to break through this community-orientated politics and induce a wider national view that the Constitutional (Donoughmore) Commission of 1929 introduced universal franchise and territorial representation.[3] Communal parties and politics lived on under adult suffrage and indeed became more entrenched with mass support. The first national party (the United National Party) that held office during and after Independence was a coalition hastily brought together from the many communal parties that were then in existence.

After Independence a conscious effort was made to lay firmer foundations for nationhood. Political power was distributed among all communities to an extent that gave them all a sense of participation in the building of the nation. National issues were placed in the forefront of political activity. Sectionalism and separatism preached by some groups in all communities were unpopular and did not gain widespread adherence. Admittedly communal issues flared up occasionally, such as over the disfranchisement of Indian Tamils of the plantations. But protest over such questions was muted and it was generally recognized that direct appeals to communal loyalties should, as far as possible, be avoided. Communalism was held to be dirty politics and it was felt that it should not blemish the efforts consciously made to promote a Ceylonese nationalism. To secure the highest common factor of agreement between communities,

elements of Westernization were encouraged. By implication it was accepted that the roots of traditional culture ought not to be nurtured and fed to any substantial degree, as this would give rise to forces that divide and disrupt the newly found national unity.

By its very nature, this form of nation-consciousness was prevalent among only a limited section of people. It was based on a concept of nationalism as secular and territorial based, claiming the exclusive loyalty of the citizens to an entity called the nation-state which represented a geographical area, the home of the 'nation', and thus included within it all its inhabitants. Such a conception was derived from Ceylon's recent connexions with the West, and in that form it was comprehensible only to those who were familiar with the background of modern European history and political thought. In the context of Ceylon this was the category of people who are variously referred to as 'middle-class', 'elite', 'English-educated', Westernized'-all of which terms convey the basic fact that they are a group of people who differ from the traditional social groups in that they are the product of the economic, social, and intellectual influences that have emanated from Western colonial rule. They have been estimated to constitute at the most about 7 per cent of the population.[5] They are socially conspicuous because their habits of dress, speech, and ways of life are clearly distinguishable from the rest of the population. For about a decade after Independence their dominance over political and public life in Ceylon was complete. On account of this dominance, the deep social and communal divisions were papered over and ignored, with unfortunate consequences for the future.

These English-educated groups formed the upper layer of the elite groups of Ceylon. They were Western-oriented and monopolized the upper rungs of political power and social privilege. Separate from these, and below them in the social scale, was another layer of elite that stemmed from traditional sources of power and traditional institutions. Unlike the English-educated elite, they formed a link between independent Ceylon and the pre-colonial Sinhalese kingdoms. They were the Sinhalese literati, the specialists in traditional Sinhalese medicine, the Sinhalese schoolmasters, the Buddhist priest-teachers. In the years after independence they were content to play second fiddle to their social and intellectual betters, to act as a liaison between these holders of power and the voting masses. They had not sufficient understanding of the Western-oriented democratic institutions that had been planted in the island for the past twenty-five years. They had as yet few strong political views of their own and no ways of making these felt in the highest councils of the state. They were not equipped to exercise or aspire for power in these new institutions.

The infiltration of the ideas of representative democracy propagated by the English-educated middle class in turn undermined their own position and finally brought them down from power. The Sinhalese-educated elite, who has so far functioned as catalysts for the English-educated, increasingly realized the strength of their position of direct contact with the mass electorate. They gained from the experience of the working of representative institutions from the lowest levels. Beginning with contests for power in local institutions such as village and district councils, rural development soci-

eties, and temple management societies, these second-rank leaders began to sense the power of the strength of numbers in democratic institutions. They also perfected a technique of dialogue with the 'masses' and of fashioning ideologies and slogans of direct relevance to the people, in a way the English-educated could not do.

The general prosperity and development in the country in post-war years, especially in the fields of education and mass communication, considerably improved the status of this partially submerged elite. With their rise in position and a growing awareness of their potential, they developed a national view of their own which differed markedly from the standpoint of the English-educated. The major changes that took place in 1956 mark it out as the year when the transfer of power was effected from the English-educated to the traditionalist elite, or at least the year when the latter group asserted themselves more vigorously and forced changes in national policy in line with their viewpoints. A growth in their influence could be noted even earlier when occasional concessions had to be made to them on many aspects of policy. A major extension in their political influence took place when sections of the more articulate and opinion-forming English-educated groups began championing their causes both for ideological reasons and out of sheer opportunism, to win their support against entrenched power groups from whom they had split away.[6] These developments saw the beginnings of fissions in the national consensus that had so far been fostered and the challenge of some of its basic assumptions.

The basic difference between the nationalism of the Westernized middle class and that of the Sinhalese-educated groups was that while the former emphasized the nation as identified with state or country, the latter identified nation with 'race'. While the nationalism of the former was secular, that of the latter was very closely interconnected with religion. Herein lay the source of much subsequent fission in the national body corporate. Such an approach would divide Ceylon's heterogeneous population on ethnic and religious lines. As long as nationalism in Ceylon was Ceylonese rather than Sinhalese it was possible for the island's many groups to partake and be integrated in it to their satisfaction. Similarly, religion had discreetly been kept out of politics since the beginning of modern political activity in Ceylon. This did not mean, of course, that the position of the different religions in the country was determined to their satisfaction. What it meant was that, just as it was implied that it was not proper to talk and act on communal lines, it was equally agreed that political solutions should not be sought to religious grievances. From about 1955 these assumptions were eroded and gradually one moved to a position where ethnic and religious issues were at the heart of the new nationalism and such questions at the heart of national politics.

Students of modern Ceylonese politics and society are generally agreed in discerning here a new phase of nationalism,[7] a phase which rose to its peak in the troubled regimes of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaiake (1956-9) and later of his widow Sirima Bandaranaiake (1960-5) and now shows signs of subsiding. The years when this new nationalism was rampant was the time when social conflicts and fissions abounded in the Ceylon scene. They were, in fact, a direct consequence of the spread of Sinhala nationalism, the political aim of the new nationalism was to separate the Sinhalese element in the Ceylonese nation and seek to establish it above all other sections. This was not to be the natural and unconscious outcome of the status of a majority community in a democratic country, but a deliberate and conscious effort to enthrone the Sinhalese as the ruling community. The justification for this was not so much that the Sinhalese formed the majority; rather it was that the Sinhalese had been the island's original settlers, its ruling race in pre-colonial times, and had given it its distinctive culture. History and mythology were enlisted in support of this position.

Politics, in this nationalist phase, was strengthened by religion. In the same way that the Sinhalese community was to predominate in Ceylonese affairs, Buddhism, the historic religion of the Sinhalese, and still professed by a great majority of them, was to be the country's dominant religion. Here, too, this aim was to be achieved by deliberate action of the community and the state. The movement to rehabilitate Buddhism is anterior to the political movement to revive Sinhalese language and society. At the time that Western-oriented nationalism was in full cry, this movement worked in a modest and restrained fashion, aiming at gradual and voluntary reform of the various institutions of Buddhism. When the Sinhalese-educated intelligentsia began to assert themselves, the role of religion in nationalist thinking was magnified. The close relation between religion and social life in traditional society was now formalized and recognized in the new political movements. The political aims of the new movement were so successful because they were vindicated in the eyes of the common man by their association with religion. The justification for the emphasis on Buddhism was that Ceylon was the historic island of the Buddha Dhamma, an early recipient of the message of Buddhism which it has since carefully treasured.[8]

The new movement and its spokesmen attacked the liberal-national consensus on two of its weakest spots. In the first place, they criticized the established order for insufficient emphasis on the Sinhalese language and on Sinhalese interests generally. It was obviously to the advantage of this now depressed stratum of elite to transfer the conduct of national affairs and national education from English to Sinhalese. If such a change were fully effected, they would replace the English-educated from the upper layers of the hierarchy of power. They wanted Sinhalese to replace English as the official language of Ceylon. As they grew more in confidence and power they claimed that Sinhalese alone should be made the official language, to the exclusion of any other national minority language that prevailed in the island. In this way they rejected decisively any possibility of an alliance with similar traditionalist anti-Western groups in the minority communities. Secondly, they criticized the lack of sufficient importance given to Buddhism in the nation's affairs. They felt the state should come forward more forcefully to fulfil its function as the protector of Buddhism and re-establish the historic connexion between the state and the Buddhist Church that existed under the pre-colonial Sinhalese kingdoms. They asked for an extensive programme of legislation by which the grievances of the Buddhist Church could be redressed. They wanted the state to use its resources and power to help Buddhist institutions to their feet, to put its various houses in order, and to lead the Buddhist revival that was taking place.

In the elections of 1956 the forces of the new nationalism found a spokesman, if not a champion, in Bandaranaiake's coalition party and helped to the fullest extent to put him in power with a substantial majority. The forces of Sinhalese and Buddhist revival worked unanimously to overthrow the liberal-national order and prepared themselves for a period of change. The changes were to consist in the destruction of privilege and inequality and the evolution of practical policies that would enable them to achieve their positive aims. In spite of the decisive victory of these forces, Bandaranaiake, during his administration, sought to temper the extremist Sinhala nationalism of his supporters with the older liberal nationalism in which he still partly believed. He attempted a legislative programme that would destroy the privileges of the middle and upper classes and the English-educated elite and do away with the gross forms of discrimination against the Sinhalese-educated intelligentsia. The most vaunted piece of legislation, and one most satisfying to this section, was the passing of the Official Language Act of July 1956, popularly known as the 'Sinhala Only Act'. It established Sinhalese as the one official language of Ceylon and imposed a period of up to five years when the transition was to be effected. Other changes swiftly followed, promoting the interests of the Sinhalese-educated by means of administrative regulations.

Two categories of people were adversely affected by these policies: the English-educated middle class and the communal and religious minorities. Though the English-educated middle class was drawn from all communities, a large majority of them were Sinhalese. Many of them were unable to adapt themselves to he new political climate. Their cherished values of liberalism, individual freedom, and secularism which they had striven to implant in Ceylon were now being undermined. Their own position was seriously threatened. Though many of them still held important political and administrative positions, it was clear that real power was passing over to the many new pressure groups that had grown around the new Government. The new men of power, mostly from rural Ceylon, worked through political and party officials and even through the Prime Minister, who was most responsive to their pressures.

The old administrative hierarchy, manned largely by the middle class, found themselves in positions of responsibility without power. Differing fundamentally in their thinking and outlook from the new power elite, they soon found themselves condemned as traitors to the nation (i.e. race) and enemies of the social revolution that these forces thought they were ushering in. In spite of this, however, the English-educated could not be dispensed with, as they were the repositories of all knowledge concerning the functioning of a modern state apparatus, and indeed of all modern learning. For the achievement of their aims of revival and rehabilitation of the Sinhalese people, the constructive thinking and ideas of the middle class were found necessary.

At this time a process of great soul-searching and considerable self-criticism was evident among English-educated elite. It is reflected in the intellectual activity of the times-the seminars and discussions organized and the published works that appeared. They were very concerned at this growing alienation between themselves and the new movement. They wondered how they could come to terms with these new forces and secure leadership over them so that they could channel them along constructive and fruitful lines. Some times this belated attempt to reorient themselves was artificial and unconvincing. A few took the easy way out and left the country. In the period 1958 to 1962 there was a considerable drain of talent from the country which was stopped only by restrictions imposed on foreign travel, by pressure on friendly governments not to recruit Ceylonese, and by a law which demanded that all those who had secured university education in Ceylon should serve the Government for a minimum period of five years. Many who were behind in the country carried on as best as they could but there seems no doubt that they were and are a demoralized and dispirited class. Under the administration of Sirima Bandranaiake pressures on them were more intense.

Very soon this class will cease to exist. It is not being added to with new recruits, as education is no longer imparted in the English medium. This makes the position of its remaining members very weak. But with the extinction of this class there will arise the problem of how a link is to be maintained with the outside world. A tiny country such as Ceylon cannot afford to live in intellectual isolation. The middle class, with all its faults *vis-a-vis* Ceylonese tradition, had been the vehicle through which the world had been interpreted to Ceylon and Ceylon to the world. How this function will be performed when the entire elite have been fully reoriented towards a national outlook, or whether this function will at all be considered necessary, remains problematic in Ceylon today. Politically speaking the discontent and disillusion of the middle class are not dangerous. They are a tiny minority, now politically disorganized, and can never emerge as an important pressure group.

As the new nationalism entered its constructive reformist stage and policies had to be underlined in detail fulfilling the general aims of this movement, its unity began to show signs of cracking. Neither the Sinhalese community nor the institutions of Buddhism were integrated in such a way as to function unitedly on the basis of the emerging concepts of nationalism. Historical developments and contemporary economic and social environment contributed to creating problems of quite a different character among various sections of the Sinhalese community. Among the Sinhalese of the coastal areas education had spread very extensively and they found the English-educated class and the privileged Christian groups an obstacle to their further progress. Here, too, subordinate non-agricultural castes had made their way up both economically and educationally and challenged the traditional high status of the agricultural caste. In the upper reaches of the hill country, the plantation area, Sinhalese peasants contrasted their plight with the prosperity of the plantations and the steady employment available to the Indian Tamils who laboured in them. They felt that their rise was associated with the attack on 'alien' capital and labour in the plantations. The disfranchisement of Indian labour in 1949 was a move to placate them.

Here, as well as in the paddy-farming plains lower down and north wards, there were feudal relationships still unsolved. Land hunger was most acute among peasants in these areas and many were

burdened with irksome dues and service obligations to a landed and official nobility. These people would not be the beneficiaries of the shift of emphasis to Sinhalese education. They were more concerned with land reform and readjustment of relations within the Sinhalese community. At the first major steps to tackle land reform in 1958 the Cabinet was seriously divided, there was unrest in the country and a political move was started which eventually drove the Minister responsible out of the Cabinet.

This necessity to balance sectional interests within Sinhalese nationalism and share the spoils of power among many diverse groups led to political instability and inevitable dissatisfaction. In contrast to the period when the English-educated middle class was in power, the dominance of Sinhalese nationalism was marked by stormy politics. The assassination of Premier Bandaranaike in September 1959 was brought about by sections that were at one time his very strong supporters, but that were disillusioned when, after three years of power, they did not get all that they had expected.

The steps to rehabilitate and revive Buddhism caused the greatest furore. Everyone was agreed that the position of Buddhism in the country was unsatisfactory at the time of independence and that this situation was the result of centuries of colonial rule. The wealth of its temples had been frittered away; their properties alienated, sometimes to Christian churches; they lacked organization and unity of purpose. Buddhism, like Hinduism in India, had become a religious culture and thus reflected all the divisions of Sinhalese society. When reformation movements extended their activity after independence, they reflected the difference in outlook and ideology prevalent among the Sinhalese elite. The Western-oriented modernizers desired to refashion Buddhist institutions in keeping with the democratic ideals of responsibility and to keep Buddhist affairs independent of state. A section of the traditionalists wanted to see the re-establishment of the power and status of the Buddhist clerical hierarchy, as under the ancient Sinhalese kings, without any internal organizational reforms that would weaken their authority. The militants of the new nationalist movement desired sweeping changes in organization, to give them access to the power hierarchy within its institutions. They wanted these changes within Buddhism as well as the general assertion of Buddhist influence in the country to be made an essential part of state policy. These differences of approach were to be found not only among Buddhist laymen but were also reflected within the Buddhist clergy *(Sangha)* who had their supporters among the laymen. These sections attached themselves to political parties and Buddhist reform became an issue of politics, changed with emotion similar to the language controversy.[11]

After the assassination of Bandaranaike, these divisions in the nationalist and revivalist front which he had papered over with some success now widened and were more open. Bandaranaike had tried to keep the nationalist programme within the bounds of democratic concepts and preserve the fundamental liberal values of the state. His successor Sirima Bandaranaike was not saddled with any such ideological commitments. Her regime gave full play to the forces of Sinhalese and Buddhist revivalism. Attacks were made on various minority interests which these minorities felt went beyond the bounds of reducing privilege and redressing past wrongs. The State

became a powerful instrument in promoting Sinhalese welfare and was made to extend its tentacles into many new avenues of economic and social life.

Here the nationalist forces secured a valuable ally in the Marxist Left who, after years in the political wilderness, abandoned their hostility to Sinhalese racialist nationalism and climbed on its band wagon, hoping eventually to direct it along lines favorable to themselves. The coalition of Marxist Communism and Sinhalese nationalism was formalized in 1964 when Sirima Bandaranaiake reshuffled her Government and admitted marxist leaders into the Cabinet with important portfolios. But this was the signal for the further fragmentation of Sinhalese nationalism. Both the conservative as well as the liberally inclined sections were upset at this trend and left the Government, seriously weakening it, and eventually causing its downfall.[12]

For a period of about a decade, from 1955 to 1965, the new Sinhalese nationalism dictated the pace of politics in Ceylon. If it was responsible for much instability, it was also the force that held together the Governments of this period and gave the country such authority and sense of direction as it had. It was fed in the early stages on a number of grievances, both real and imaginary. Lack of any recognition for many years had made it quite aggressive now and in this mood compromise and accommodation could not flourish. Minority groups like the Ceylon Tamils, Christians, English-educated middle class and Indian Tamils appeared as so many hostile forces arrayed in opposition to Sinhalese advance. The vernacular press, politicians, and clergy helped to stir these feelings. In 1956 it was possible for the many strands in this new Sinhalese nationalism to work together politically and hence the remarkable electoral victory of Bandaranaiake.

By 1960 this was not possible any more. Inner contradictions within the movement asserted themselves. The monopoly of control over these forces held by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the creation of Bandaranaiake, was ended. The United Nationalist Party, so decisively defeated in 1956, was able to attract part of the new nationalist support. In the elections of 1960 and even more in those of 1965, the two parties were able to compete on equal terms. When the unanimity was gone, much of the sting was removed from Sinhalese nationalism. It now enters a new and as yet undetermined phase.

A consideration of the position of the minorities is important to demonstrate the effect the rise of Sinhalese nationalism had on national unity. The Tamils of Ceylon have settled in that island for centuries. Their immigration in small groups from Southern India occurred from the early centuries of the Christian era. More intensive and systematic migrations started from the eleventh century and by 1300 they were in a position to carve out a kingdom for themselves in the northern half of the island. This kingdom lost its independence to the Portuguese, who unified it with the rest of maritime Ceylon. Though today numerically a small minority, the Tamils' stake in the country is great. They have no connexions with the Indian mainland and have appropriated portions of the island as their traditional homelands. Here they have been able to develop their language, religion, and social institutions. Because of their

from South India, their society differs in its structure from that prevalent in Tamilnad. The lands where they settled were the least hospitable parts of the island. Assisted by independent political power and an integrated social structure, they developed forms of production and economic life that derived the best from this land and made it a self-sufficient and reasonably prosperous unit in the island. A little less than half the entire Ceylon Tamil population is concentrated in the small peninsula of Jaffna in the northernmost part of the island, with a density over twice that of the national average. The existence of an underground water table and fairly high utilization of land by rotation of crops and intense care have sustained this population at a level of subsistence. The increase in population and fragmentation of land have from the beginning of this century forced Tamil youths to look outside the peninsula for employment.

In such conditions, the spread of education, first by Christian missionary effort and later supplemented by Hindu associations, offered a valuable opportunity. This receptiveness encouraged Christians of all denominations to concentrate their educational efforts in Jaffna. Next to Colombo and the Western Province, Jaffna became the second most educationally advanced region in the island. The people of Jaffna made full use of these educational opportunities and this created a growing body of English-educated Tamils who would be used in the administrative services of the British Government in Ceylon and even in Britain's other tropical colonies. From the end of the nineteenth century these youths left Jaffna for Colombo and other southern cities, and later to Britain's Malayan territories, to fill lower grades of clerical employment.

This trek for employment was no migration; these people retained their ties with Jaffna. They kept their ancestral homes, their kinship ties, and fulfilled all their social obligations. At the end of their tenures they retired to their Jaffna homes. Under British rule such development went on harmoniously; there was no serious competition for employment between communities. Facilities for English education were not widespread among the Sinhalese, and those who could offer themselves for such employment were proportionately few. In 1942 all education was made free and after Independence special attention was given to backward rural Sinhalese areas. This brought more Sinhalese into competition for administrative and commercial employment. The new-comers naturally suffered from the entrenched position of the Tamils of Jaffna, especially in certain special functions which the Tamils took to more than others. As long as there was open competition, and this, too, in the English language, there was nothing they could do except to equip themselves better.

The cry for the introduction of Sinhalese as the official language was to a large extent motivated by the advantage it would give in the struggle for employment. Those who would benefit immediately from it were in the forefront of the propaganda offensive. The introduction of Sinhalese at all levels of government business, and the gradual abandonment of the competitive principle, affected most the Tamils of Jaffna. With their limited holdings of land already overburdened, with no substantial capital being invested in their areas and no prospect of any new industrial ventures, and with the only existing outlet to employment blocked, they face a stark future indeed. Especially under the administration of Sirima Bandaranaiake they were pressed hard. They had no access to the high policy-making bodies, absolutely no influence in government, and all their leaders were condemned to a perennial and sterile opposition.

From these recent events it is evident how dependent are the fortunes of the Tamil community on the ebb and flow of the tide of Sinhalese nationalism. When the forces of Sinhalese nationalism secure such ascendancy and unanimity as to be able to capture state power without the help of any non-Sinhalese elements, then the Tamils and all other minorities must go under. The hardship caused to the Tamils must be especially great as they have no means of economic self-sufficiency and are heavily dependent on state employment. Also, because of their social and cultural conservatism, they would find it most difficult to reconcile themselves to Sinhalese linguistic and cultural domination. In the darkest days of the Tamil community, separatism and autonomy for the Tamils were put forward as a practical solution to their problem. They had not a shred of loyalty at that time to the State and their feeling of belonging to a common Ceylonese nation was rudely shaken. The replacement of the present unitary Constitution with a federation of two states-Sinhalese and Tamil-has for some time been put forward and was now accepted by a great majority of Tamils. But such a Constitution and its many implications have not been fully considered, nor does this proposal take account of the fact that ultra-nationalist Sinhalese domination of the centre can always emasculate the prospective Tamil state.

A by-product of the alienation of the Tamils from the Sinhalese was the strengthening of Tamil nationalism and an intensive interest in the Tamil cultural tradition. This led to the forging of closer ties with the Indian Tamil community in Central Ceylon from whom the Ceylon Tamils had so far been isolated geographically and socially. Political parties and leaders representing the two groups of people began to have closer ties and discussed possibilities of joint action to safeguard common interests. Another more serious consequence to the integrity of the Ceylonese nation is the tendency of the Ceylon Tamils to forge links with the numerically larger Tamil community in the state of Madras. In an earlier day, this imaginary threat from 30 million to rouse Sinhalese nationalism. In its crudest form, the extremists of the Sinhalese nationalist movement presented the Sinhalese nation as subject to a continuous threat of extermination by the Tamils of South India for whom the Tamil communities of Ceylon would act as a Trojan horse. It has been argued that the excessive anti-Tamil character of Sinhalese nationalism is caused by the fear of submergence by the Tamils of India. It is ironical that the actions of the nationalists brought about and strengthened the very factors they were fearing. When the Tamils were pushed hard, they began to look fondly towards India and the state of Madras as their saviour. In this way the extremes of Sinhalese nationalism and Tamil separatism fed each other, and the casualty was the Ceylonese nation.

Christian denominations constitute 9 per cent of the population, with Roman Catholics being the most numerous group among them:

they are spread among Sinhalese and Tamils. While they are geographically scattered all over the island, some heavy concentrations exist along the sea coast north of Colombo up to Mannar. Under British rule they had an early start with education and modernization, and equipped themselves faster to step into positions of authority. The educational structure set a premium on Christian advancement. Missionary schools, many of them of excellent quality, were strategically situated all over the country and were heavily subsidized from state funds. Supported by resources from the central organizations of these missions and by private contributions of the relatively affluent Ceylonese Christian community, the Churches and schools were able to function very effectively in the country and give the community a wide measure of social welfare. The educational system came increasingly under bitter attack by the Buddhist movement, which demanded nationalization of all schools and the denial of subvention to private schools that chose to stay out of the national system.

This radical change of the educational structure was effected in 1961, regardless of unanimous opposition from Christian denominations. Christians thought that the measure went beyond the scope of redressing the legitimate grievances of Buddhists to the extent of denying the fundamental right to choose the kind of education parents would want to impart to their children. The schools that stayed out of the state system could admit only children of the denomination that managed the school, were not entitled to state funds and could not charge fees from its pupils.[13] With these conditions it was not possible to manage a school without the greatest financial hardship. The few private schools in the island are now leading a tottering and shaky existence. In this, and in some other lesser acts directed at Christian institutions at the peak of Sinhalese nationalism, the community felt threatened and insecure.

The Indian Tamil community exist as an unassimilated and inassimilable element in the Ceylonese nation. They were brought by the British Government from Southern India to provide labour for the plantations that were opened up in the central highlands. They have continued to live here in isolation and are looked on with hostility by their neighbors, the Sinhalese of the hill country. They were yet another target of Sinhalese nationalist propaganda. The liberal franchise laws at the time of independence enabled them to send seven representatives to Parliament from the territorial electorates, much to the chagrin of the Kandyan Sinhalese, who bitterly resented this 'alien' representation. Their disfranchisement and the rigorous citizenship laws of 1951 removed their voice from national political affairs.

The seriousness of the problem of national integration may be gauged from the fact that, out of 1,200,00 Indians resident in Ceylon, only 120,000 have been granted citizenship. About 130,00 opted for Indian citizenship and left the country. The balance of close upon one million people are termed 'stateless' and have an undetermined status. They have been the subject of much negotiation between the Governments of India and Ceylon. The most recent agreement between the two countries rather arbitrarily sets the figure that Ceylon will eventually absorb at 300,00.[14] In the meanwhile, pressures are mounting to enforce the gradual employment of Sinhalese labour in these estates and thus displace Indians. The plantation management is doubtful about the economic consequences of such action. Sinhalese extremists would gladly see all Indians out of the country as soon as possible, as they are an impediment to their aim of Sinhalese domination in the hill country. Here is another instance of direct opposition between the policies of Sinhalese nationalism and the interests of a minority community.

These observations illustrate how in this second phase of nationalism in Ceylon, sectional interests and localities of conflicting types within the Ceylonese nation have emerged. The chief among these is Sinhalese nationalism, which, because of the numerical superiority of the Sinhalese, must always predominate politically. Its present aim is to redress past grievances of the Sinhalese people and the Buddhist religion. In that sense it is a necessary adjustment of the colonial past and a necessary reconstruction of society when a nation becomes master of its own affairs. But such reform is always difficult to bring about and its path is strewn with many dangers. When the attempt is made to promote the interests of a community by legislation, the line between justice and privilege is blurred. Especially is this so when the aggrieved party is itself the sole arbiter of the proposed changes. At the height of its power Sinhalese nationalism has full control over Parliament and executive. Its leaders decided on measures that would do justice to the Sinhalese without consulting and accommodating many minority groups that were vitally affected by these measures. The privileged position hitherto enjoyed by these minorities for various historical reasons was considered justification for the imposition on them of present and future sufferings.

Most recent events since 1965 seem to indicate that the tide of Sinhalese nationalism has reached its peak and can now be contained by constructive and fruitful policies. Herein lies hope for the country's future. Many of the aims of Sinhalese nationalism have been achieved and the source of grievance and injustice eradicated. The Sinhalese language has become unquestionably the official language of state. The educational system has been reoriented to serve the interests of the Sinhalese. Employment opportunities are now made available to the Sinhalese in numbers more than proportionate to their ratio of population. The welfare of the Buddhist religion has been made the concern of the state and aided by it many voluntary organizations are carrying on the revivalist movement.

These are all achievements which no government can go back upon. They have been accepted by all major political parties and will therefore soon cease to be political issues. Parts of the Sinhalese nationalist programme have been accepted by more than one political party. In the elections of 1960 and 1965, ideological and social cleavages within the Sinhalese community showed prominently. Such divisions, natural in a democratic society, have been the saving of minority groups, which now begin to count in politics, can use their influence one way or he other and bring about solutions which tend to their own self-preservation and thus to the preservation of national unity. Likewise, the inability of Buddhist revivalist forces to present themselves as a unified movement is also a favorable omen for the future. The Buddhist clergy is now by no means a united body with a singleness of purpose. Many undesirable events

have demonstrated the rashness of mixing religion and politics. Even if Buddhist *bhikkhus* are not fully forsaking the election platform for the pulpit, the fact that the Sangha support is divided between many political parties somewhat neutralizes their influence. The widely varied views among Buddhists on the role of Buddhism in a modern state make it impossible for the Buddhist revivalist movement to be enrolled in support of one single political party.

The dichotomous character of the elite of Ceylon, with English-educated and Sinhalese-educated pulling in different directions, is being eliminated. The entire educational system is geared to a common end. The cause of tension within the elite have been removed. The Sinhalese-educated elite have achieved power and now have an idea of the responsibilities that go with power. They have an idea of what is possible in a multiracial society and what is not. There is greater appreciation of the obligations of a majority community towards minorities, and that discontented minorities in a democratic state can obstruct the progress of majority interests. They should also now appreciate the international implications of national policies and the necessity to justify international public opinion the actions of a government, especially if that state lays claim to protect all fundamental liberties. In brief, it is assumed that the Sinhalese-educated elite, by being brought in touch with government and with international relations, is not isolated and bitter and no longer looks inwards and backwards. It has now achieved a greater degree of sophistication in its ideas and experiences and has been politically modernized.

A related and equally healthy factor is the disappearance of the great gulf between urban and rural Ceylon. For a long time rural areas were just appendages of the urban centres which set the pace of politics. The rural voter has now realized his importance and political parties pay due attention to his interests in fashioning policies. Thus a balance has been struck in politics which will lead to the strengthening of democratic forms of government in the country. These factors, though operating mainly within the majority community, have removed potential sources of tensions and, judging from the experience of some Asian and African countries, potential threats to unity and freedom.

A further factor of strength the nation derives from recent experiences is the fact that, in two decades of parliamentary government, almost every prevalent ideology has had a hand at guiding the destinies of the nation. The possibility of peaceful change by persuasion of voters has been demonstrated many times and the judgement of the electorate has come to be accepted. No doubt illegal seizure of power was sometimes attempted, but the general ineffectiveness and even ludicrous character of such attempts showed the strength of lawful institutions of the state. Even in the worst period of executive interference with personal liberties, the judiciary remained a firm guarantor of freedom and was sturdily independent of the executive and legislature. The democratic framework has emerged stronger after the strain of these recent years.

The minorities have felt the heavy hand of Sinhalese power and have learnt to moderate their demands. They can now distinguish between privileges and rights and will learn to live without built-in advantages. They now realize that, in a democratic state, the dominance of the interests of the majority community must be accepted. It is hoped that these moderating factors will operate on all groups in the island and that they will thus live together with greater mutual tolerance than they have recently shown.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the geographical background to historical developments in Ceylon, see H.T. Ray (Ed.), *History of Ceylon,* Vol. I, Part I, Peradenya, Ceylon University Press, 1959, pp. 8-19.

2. G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British,* Colombo, Colombo Apothecaries Company, 1952, pp. 182-3.

3. *Ceylon, Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution,* London, 1928, pp. 90-100.

4. For a study in depth of this phase of nationalism in Ceylon, see Sir Ivor Jennings, 'Nationalism and Political Development in Ceylon', *Ceylon Historical Journal,* Vol. III, No. 1 pp. 62-84.

5. I.D.S. Weerawardena, 'The Development of a Middle Class in Ceylon', *International Institute of Differing Civilizations, 29th Session, london, Development of a Middle Class in Tropical and Sub-tropical Countries,* Brussels, 1956, pp. 280-92.

6. Jennings, 'Politics in Ceylon since 1952', *Pacific Affairs,* Vol. XXVII. No. 4, December 1954, pp. 338-52.

7. See, for example, B.H. Farmer, 'Social Basis of Nationalism in Ceylon', *Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol. XXIV, no. 3, May 1965, pp. 4431-40; and R.N. Kearney, 'Sinhalese Nationalism and Social Conflict in Ceylon', *Pacific Affairs,* Vol. XXXVII, no. 2, Summer 1964, pp. 125-36.

8. For an analysis of the Buddhist revivalist movement and its social implications, see M. Ames, 'Ideological and Social Change in Ceylon', *Human Organization,* Vol. XXII, No. 1, Spring 163, pp. 45-53.

9. For a typical of this, see 'This Role of the Western-educated Elite', *Community,* Vol. IV, No. i, 1962, pp. 3-42; see also E.R. Sarathchandra, 'The Traditional Culture of Ceylon and its Present Position', in R. Peiris (Ed.), *Traditional Sinhalese Culture,* Peradeniya, 1956, pp. 99-103.

10. W.H. Wriggins, *Ceylon: The Dilemmas of a Nation,* Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1960, pp. 294-5.

11. Wriggins, op. cit., pp. 193-210.

12. R.N. Kearney, 'The Marxists and the Coalition Government in Ceylon', *Asian Survey* Vol. V, No. 2, February 1965, pp. 120-4.

13. *Keesings Contemporary Archives,* 18-25 March 1961, p. 17995-7.

14. Op. cit., 14-21 November 1964, p. 20405.

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