

HISTORY of Ceylon Tamils



ஈழத்தமிழர்
வரலாறு

English

Tamil

Mrs. Vasantha Nadarajan, B.A.

திருமணலெக்ஷி விழா
வாழ்த்துக்கள்
கஜா குமாரி சில் கல்
கூடா

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வரலாறு

TAMIL & ENGLISH

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION:
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About the Author



Vasantha Nadarajan began her career as a Program Producer at the Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation, and became a well known personality in the Tamil community through the many popular and successful programs she produced for that radio station. She was also the first female announcer

in the country to do running commentary for direct broadcasts from locations and venues of important events. She had later worked as a Production Assistant for the South Indian Television Network, Doordarshan. While she was in India, she made a name for herself by writing and producing a series of social and historical dramas for worldwide broadcast from Philippines by Veritas via Santhom, its branch station in Madras. In recognition of her talents, Tamil Nadu newspapers named her, "The Spring Breeze from Ceylon."

Learning about the ancient history and the cultural heritage of the Eelam Tamil people had been one of her obsessions. This is evident from her selecting ancient chronicles, ancient stone inscriptions, and Dravidian languages as her research topics when pursuing her Master's degree at the Vidyalkankara University. Through these researches she acquired vast knowledge of Ceylon-Indian history. Her interest in these fields did not end with her studies. It continued even after her leaving the motherland and migrating to Canada.

She had been writing and producing her own Tamil language program, "Thamil Olzi," in Toronto on 530 AM for a number of years. In 1995, she released a selection from her broadcast series in CD format under the title "Holy Shrines of Eelam." She also published another selection from her broadcasts in book form, with the text of it in both Tamil and English languages, naming it "Tamils and Hindu Traditions." The first edition of that book was released in 1997, and its second edition appeared in 1999.

She had written several short stories, novels, poetry, and feature articles for newspapers and periodicals in Sri Lanka under two of her pen names, Senthiru and Veeyen. She continues her literary creations from Canada even now. In 1998, she was invited to read a Research Paper at the World Hindu Conference that was held in the French capital of Paris. Members of the Tamil intellectual community commend her as an able researcher, flowery orator and talented author.

Her deep desire is to pass her knowledge of the ancient history of the Eelam Tamil people and their cultural heritage to the future generations of the expatriate Tamil community and, at the same time, provide an opportunity for other communities also to learn about the ancient history of the Tamil people. This book is a reflection of her desires, and her latest, but not the last, effort towards fulfilling her dreams. It contains a selection from the radio series "Tamil Homeland," that Vasantha had earlier aired over the radio waves for her program, "Thamil Olzi." May her services continue to flourish!

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History of Eelam Tamils

A Foundation for Research

It is a misconception among some people that the history of Ceylon begins with the arrival of Vijayan to Ceylon. **Vijayan arrived in Ceylon only in the year 483 BC.** But the history of Ceylon had its beginning many thousands of years before his arrival. Records in ancient chronicles show that the local population had received Vijayan and his followers in a very courteous and cultured manner when they landed on the island. This is concrete proof that there had been an indigenous population with a well-developed language and distinct culture living in the country even before the arrival of Vijayan. It is only the history of the Sinhalese race that begins with the arrival of Vijayan to Ceylon from Kalingam in India. Historical records show that a group of autochthonous people had not only welcomed Vijayan when he arrived, but also that he had, in fact, married Kuvani, their Queen. Who were these people? What was their religion? What was their language?

It is a historical fact that Buddhism was first introduced to Ceylon during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan. This king ruled Ceylon from 247 BC to the year 207 BC. If this is taken into account, the question now arises as to what religion the local population followed, and what language they spoke before this period. Almost all historians had up till now, and for obvious reasons, purposely ignored answering these questions.

The purpose of this book is not only to find answers to these burning questions through references to recorded material but also to serve as a foundation for future research on this subject.

Vasanthanadarajan

The legendary inhabitants of the country (Ceylon) were the Iyakkars, Nagars and Devas, and under these names possibly a kernel of fact may be concealed.

H. S. Codrington
(A Short History of Ceylon)

Mahavansa Records is mainly traditional history, and its statements have to be **carefully examined** before they are accepted as historical evidence.

G. C. Mendis
(The Early History of Ceylon)

There is no doubt about the earliest **Eelam Culture being Dravidian**. The cultures of present Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking races are its offshoots. The advent of Buddhism had only helped in polarising the local population into two different ethnic groups.

Dr. K. Kunarasa
(ஈழத்தவர் வரலாறு – “History of the Eelamites”)

“Vijayan, a person from Kalingam, arrived in Ceylon and, later, married a local lady by the name of **Kuveni**.”

Mahavansa

The Question arises, since both **Ramayana and Bharatha are true histories**, do they refer to the heritage of the Tamils in any way? Yes. They do refer in good detail and they are quite irrefutable evidence of the hoary heritage of Tamils way back to 5000 BC.

Ravanam, Maricha, and others spoke Tamil as well as Sanskrit. **They were Tamilians**. Ravanam, was a good Tamilian as well as an excellent Sivabakthan. He had ‘Rakshasa’ powers and habits. **The Era of Ramayana is 4400 BC**

The International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilization

“Vasantham Publications”

1. **Tamils and Hindu Traditions**
(Text in both Tamil and English languages)
First Publication – 1997
Second Edition – 1999
2. **History of Eelam Tamils**
First Edition – 1999

“Vasantham Productions”

1. **Eelathin Thiruthalangal (Sacred Shrines of Eelam)**
(Narrative and Religious songs)
CD I & CD II
First Release – 1995
2. **‘Tamil Olzi’ Radio Program broadcasted on 530 AM Band**
(Saturday and Sunday Broadcasts - 1993 – 1997)
The series, “**History of Temples**”, had also been released in CD format.
“**Hindu Traditions**” and “**Tamil Eela Homeland**” had been published in book form.

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Forward

What is the reason for the Tamils, who had been a ruling race at one time, ending up as refugees in foreign countries all over the world? What is the root cause for all the alienation they are being subjected to, and the humiliation they are going through, in the country of their birth and, there, leading miserable lives like second class citizens? Who is responsible for this atrocious situation? Why, and by whom, was the true history of Ceylon twisted this way to portray the autochthonous and indigenous Tamils as foreign immigrants? Why are the racist political opportunists and the Buddhist clergy so vehement in their endeavour to rewrite the history of Ceylon and hide from world view the ancient history and cultural heritage of the Ceylon Tamil race? Questions like these had been tormenting my heart for a very long period of time.

Authors, historians, chroniclers, and scribes of Ceylon history had intentionally, purposely, and with ulterior motives, ignored the ancient history, culture and civilization that had existed in Ceylon during the pre-Buddhist era. They had done the same thing to the rulers of that era and their good governance. Racial, religious, linguistic and other biases on their part had played a major role in this plot.

The Tamils and the Sinhalese are consanguine – from the same autochthonous Dravidian stock of Nagars and Iyakkars. With the passage of time, intermingling of races and intermixing of blood had also been taking place between the indigenous population and other Indian races of people who had come to the country from time to time as invaders, migrants, and traders. Such events were and still are common among all races of people in the world, irrespective of whether they be ancient or extant. A quintessential race is hard to find. It is almost non-existent in the world today.

But, the present controversy in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) is about who the original inhabitants of Ceylon were. Are they the Sinhalese or the Tamils? Are the original inhabitants the

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Sinhalese, who are the descendants of Vijayan, a renegade who arrived in Ceylon after being banished from Kalingam in India? or, are they the Tamils - the descendants of the aboriginal Nagars and Iyakkars, who were living in the country when Vijayan arrived, and who gave him a bride as well? The main focus of this book, "The History of Ceylon Tamils," is not only to provide answers to this burning question but also to furnish information about the true situation that gave rise to the existing controversy.

A large portion of the land area in Ceylon, known as "The Jaffna Kingdom," had been ruled by the Ariyan Emperors as a separate and sovereign State up till 1620 AD. Rulers belonging to this dynasty had also ruled the entire country from time to time. There are numerous evidences to support this historical fact.

At that point of time in 1505 AD when the Portuguese set foot in the country, Tamil kings were ruling the Jaffna kingdom, Nayakkar kings were ruling the Kandyan kingdom, and Sinhalese kings were ruling Kotte, Seethawaka and Ragama. The country passed from Portuguese to the Dutch, and finally to the British, and all these separate entities were amalgamated into a single unit by the foreign imperialists for administrative convenience.

At the time the country was granted independence in 1948, the British handed over the country to the racist majority when they were fully aware that the Sinhalese and the Tamils constituted two different races with different languages, religions and culture. This may be because of their policy of divide and rule. The Tamil politicians of the day also, without even an iota of forethought about the future, agreed to that arrangement. This is the foundation for all the ills the Tamil people are suffering and the problems they are facing today. There are historical evidences to show that the present-day Northern Province, the Eastern Province, and a few other areas were traditionally the homeland of the Tamils before the foreign conquest. Proving

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this historical fact is also another intention of this book, "The History of Ceylon Tamils."

The anti-Tamil communal riots of 1958, 1977, and 1983, together with the genocide, human rights violations, and the broken promises of the governments, made me think about the future of the Tamil people. The terrible incidents that took place when I was living with my parents in Puttalam in 1958 are still fresh in my mind. Hundreds of innocent Tamil people were massacred. Pregnant Tamil women were put into tar barrels and burnt alive. I am still unable to overcome the trauma of hiding in a haystack after losing my father, getting loaded like cattle with hundreds of others into a lorry, and wandering as a refugee in my mother's embrace. This raised a thousand questions in my mind even at that tender age when I was just a small girl.

The atrocities committed against the Tamil people in and around Colombo in 1977 raised further questions. The incidents during the communal riots of 1983 when Tamil properties were burnt, Tamil people slashed with swords and killed, thousands of Tamil people ending up as refugees in schools and sent to Jaffna by ship, made me to think seriously about who we are and what our history is. From that time, I devoted myself in researching this subject.

Whilst doing so, it became clear that Tamils were the original inhabitants of Ceylon, and people, with political axes to grind, had been engaged in re-writing history for their political and personal gains. The histories of Ceylon and India I studied, together with the advice and guidance I received from friends were of immense help to me in my pursuit. Opinions and conclusions of research historians, archaeological findings of recent times, material found in the classics and chronicles, also served to bring out the true history of Ceylon Tamils. "The History of Ceylon Tamils" is the result of my urge and eagerness to share my findings with others

"Tamil Eela Thayakam" (Homeland of Ceylon Tamils) was a radio program I had been broadcasting as a serial for a

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number of months on 530 AM over "Thamil Olzi," the Radio Broadcasting Service I was conducting for quite some time. Many of my listeners had been asking me to publish the contents of that program in a book format. There were many others who encouraged me and came forward to help me do it. As a result of the requests from my listeners, help from friends, and encouragement from my well wishers, my radio series "Thamil Eela Thayakam," is now in your hands in the form of a book - "The History of Ceylon Tamils."

As I was very anxious that the future generations of expatriate Tamils should not forget their roots and, at the same time, feel proud of their heritage, I wished for an English translation of my book, and that task was gladly undertaken by Mr. Kumarasamy Jawaharlal Nehru.

Mr. Nehru is an amateur journalist and the Political Columnist for "Tamils' Information." He was a keen student of politics back in Ceylon, and continues to be so even here in Canada. He devotes a major part of his time to volunteer work. For his volunteer service, he had received awards from the "Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture," Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, and the New Pioneer's Award from "Skills For Change." He followed a Course in Human Rights at the University of Prince Edward Island on a scholarship granted by the Human Rights Foundation of Canada. He was a Founder Member of Valvai Welfare Association, and had been its President for the first three years and its Patron for another three years. He is a Founder Member of the Sri Lanka Post & Telecommunication Association of Canada, its Secretary for a number of years and is currently the Editor of its Newsletter, "TelePost." He had served as a member of the Board of Directors of "Skills For Change," and also at the "Bloor Information and Legal Service," two very popular community organizations in Toronto. He is currently a final year undergraduate student at the York University, Toronto, majoring in Social Science. He helped me with the English translation of this book, and also did the wordprocessing for the entire English portion of this book.

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My sincere thanks to Mr.Sritharan Selvanayagam, the proprietor of Viveka Printers, for the beautiful printing job done.

My thanks go to Mr. Roger De Pinto, the proprietor of Centennial Optical, (Toronto) for personally distributing copies of my book (Tamils and Hindu Traditions) to all the employees in his establishment and also for his financial support.

I also wish to thank Mr. Thesomayanthan Muthiah, who is living France, for making our publications available to our brothers and sisters in Britain, France, Norway, Sweeden and England.

At the time I was toying with the idea of publishing my broadcast material in book form, it was my beloved husband, Mr. Ambalavanar Nadarajan, who encouraged me to go ahead, saying that it would be a service to the future generation of Tamils, especially those domiciled in foreign countries. Without his encouragement, advice and, most of all, his patience and tolerance, this task of mine would never have been possible. I thank him from the bottom of my heart.

I also wish to thank my beloved son, Senthana Nadarajan (B.Eng.,) for being a pillar of moral support during times of stress and strain that normally goes with any undertakings of this nature.

My sincere thanks also goes to my beloved daughter, Vanathy Sivakumaran (Gen. Acct.) and my son-in-law, Kanagaratnam Sivakumaran (B.Eng.,) for their unstinted support and assistance during my "Thamil Olzi" broadcasting days, and also for proof-reading the manuscript during the production of this book.

The magnificent reader response and financial support I received for my first book, "Tamils and Hindu Traditions," that was released in 1997, made it possible for me to release not only a second edition of that book but also paved the way for the publication of this book - "The History of Ceylon Tamils."

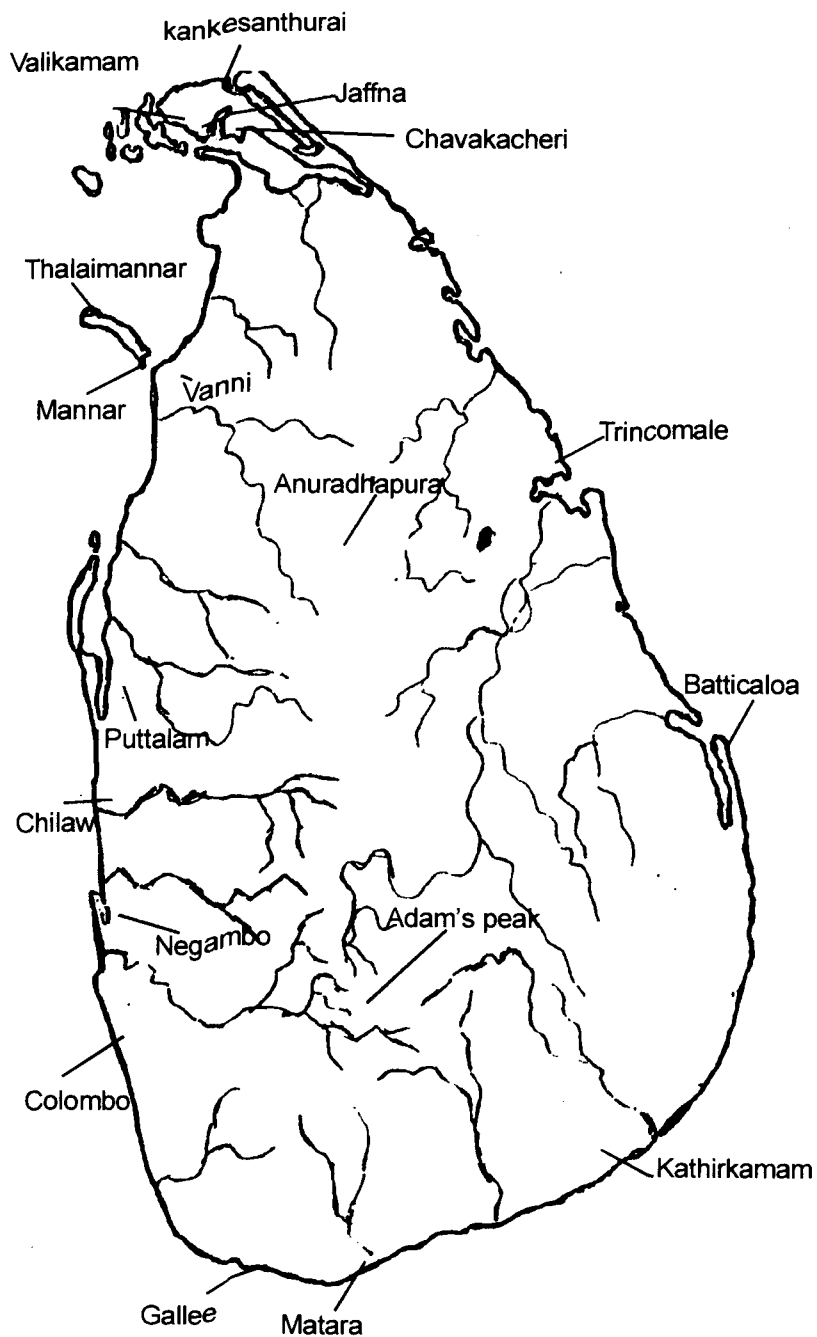
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I also thank all my friends, members of the Tamil media, and my loving Tamil brothers and sisters who extended their cooperation and encouragement at a time when I needed them the most.

At this crucial period of time in the history of Ceylon Tamils, when the Tamil youths are sacrificing their lives for the liberation of our Motherland, I dedicate this book, with all humility, humbleness, and with prayers, to the lotus feet of the omnipresent, omnipotent Almighty, with the fervent hope that this book would enable the expatriate Tamil people, their future generation, and other communities as well, to learn the true history of the Ceylon Tamils.

Mrs. Vasantha Nadarajan B.A

Toronto,
Canada
1999



The Island of Ceylon

Ceylon is a historically well-known island in the Indian Ocean. The population consists of **Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers (Eurasians)**; and the main religions are **Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity**. This island of Ceylon, with a population of nearly 15 million and an area of sixty five thousand six hundred square kilometres (65,600), is situated 47 kilometres to the south-east of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent.

Nagars and Iyakkars were the original inhabitants of Ceylon, and the present population, which now identifies themselves as two different races of Tamils and Sinhalese, are their descendants. The Sinhalese people speak the Sinhala language and are mostly Buddhists, with a small minority of them belonging to various Christian denominations. It was through the close friendship that existed between King Devanampiya Theesan, who ruled Ceylon between 247 and 207 BC, and Emperor Asokan of Kalingam, who was a Buddhist convert, that Buddhism was first introduced to Ceylon. The question of what religion the people of Ceylon followed before the advent of Buddhism is an open-ended one. From ancient artefacts discovered during archaeological explorations, research, and evidence gathered from literary and historical records, it has come to light that the religion followed by these people of the pre-Buddhist era was a sort of mixture of Hinduism and nature-worship.

The origin of the Sinhala language can be attributed to Pali, the language of Buddhist scriptures, mixing with

the *lingua franca* of the time and evolving into a separate language. The language which was spoken in the country before the arrival of Buddhism was known as “**Eela**” or “**Eelapashai**,” which means, **Eela Language**.

Mahavansa and **Chulavansa**, which are considered to be epics describing Sinhalese history, were not written in the Sinhalese language but in Pali. The initial scripts for these two epics were written by a Buddhist priest in the 6th century AD, and subsequent additions had been made to them by other Buddhist priests in the 13th century AD, and again in the year 1817 AD. The fact that these two epics had been written by Buddhist priests, may be the reason for the undue prominence given in their narratives to Buddhist kings and their reign at the expense of others. As H. W. Codrington, who had done extensive research on Ceylon History, noted, “Mahavansa Records is mainly traditional history.” As such, great caution should be exercised before considering quotes from these epics as proof or conclusions.

According to Mahavansa, the history of Ceylon begins with the arrival of Vijayan, a young prince from the kingdom of Kalingam in India. The day of Vijayan’s arrival in Ceylon coincided with an anniversary of the date Lord Buddha attained Nirvana. Vijayan is referred to as the son of Singavahu, the ruler of Singapuram, which was a principality of the larger Kalinga kingdom in India. Mahavansa, which is supposed to be the recorded history of the origin of the Sinhala race, contains nothing the Sinhala race can really be proud of. Even then, many historians, without proper research, had always coupled the history of the Sinhalese race with the arrival of Vijayan.

According to Mahavansa, Singhavahu’s mother Subadevi was the daughter of Kalingan, king of Vankathesam, which is the present-day Bangladesh. This Subadevi is mentioned in Mahavansa as having deserted her husband, and had gone to live with a lion in a cave as husband and wife. Later, she had given birth to two children fathered by that lion, and Singavahu was one of them. Vijayan, the son of Singavahu, thus becomes the grandson of this Subadevi and the lion. According to this epic, the Sinhalese race descended directly from this Vijayan. It is interesting, and also important, to note here that **Vijayan, who is considered the very root of the Sinhalese race, was an Indian in the first place**, not to mention other aspects of it.

According to Mahavansa, Vijayan had been a terrible delinquent and a person of bad character - a prodigal son to a ruler. In accordance with the law of the land, he, together with his gang-of-seven-hundred, was rounded-up, put on board three ships and banished from the country. All these three ships happened to reach the shores of Ceylon: one at **Thamaraparni** on the north-west coast, the second one at **Nakkavaratheevu**, and the third at **Mahilatheevu**. At the time of Vijayan’s arrival, two indigenous races, the Nagars and Iyakkars, were already living in Ceylon. He befriended these people and, subsequently, married Kuveni, the queen of the Iyakkars clan. Following their leader, all his gang members also married girls from the same clan. Mahavansa states that Vijayan later abandoned Kuveni and his children by her, and got married to one of the daughters of the Pandiyan king of southern India.

Vijayan and his gang members were all Hindus. Even before the arrival of Vijayan, the Nagars and Iyakkars

themselves were Hindus. Ravanana, the king of Iyakkars, was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, the supreme Hindu deity. In his book, "The History of Jaffna" (யாழ்ப்பாணச் சரித்திரம்), Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam states, that Vijayan was a Hindu, and that he not only built several new Hindu temples but also attended to the renovation of many of the temples that already existed. It becomes clear here, that Vijayan was able to marry into the Hindu Tamil-speaking royal family of the Pandiyas in India, only by his virtue of being a Hindu. Even though Vijayan was from Kalinga, both his marriages had been to Dravidian Tamil brides. Whilst Mahavansa states that the present Sinhalese race descended directly from Vijayan, an Indian expatriate, the Sinhalese people claim themselves to be the original inhabitants of the country.

"The Kalinga dynasty in Ceylon disappeared during the time of Vijayan's fifth generation. After that, the country was ruled by the Misira caste – a hybrid of the Kalinga and Nagar races"¹. Mahavansa has thus proved that **the present Sinhalese race is a mixture of Nagars, Iyakkars and Kalingars**. It also becomes clear here, without even an iota of doubt, that there had been a culturally advanced Dravidian race living in Ceylon even before the arrival of Vijayan.

King Thevanampiya Theesan, who ruled Ceylon from 247 BC to 207 BC, and Emperor Asokan of India were contemporaries. Asokan, who ruled the Indian kingdom of Mahatha, was a Hindu. Even though he was victorious in the Kalinga war, after seeing for himself the carnage, destruction and loss of lives, he not only embraced

¹ Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, The History of Jaffna

Buddhism and its doctrine of non-violence, but also devoted his entire life and everything within his means to spread that gospel around the world. Mahintha, who was sent by his father, Asokan, to Ceylon to preach the Buddhist doctrine, was able to convert King Thevanampiya Theesan and his family to that religion. Following the footsteps of their ruler, the hitherto Hindu-Sinhalese race of the Misira caste and some of the Hindus from Nagar and Iyakkara races also converted to Buddhism.

As Buddhism was introduced to Ceylon during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan, the question now arises as to what religion he would have followed before his conversion to Buddhism. What was the religion of the original inhabitants of Ceylon and the descendants of Vijayan before they adopted Buddhism as their religion? It is questions like these the historians had ignored. The indigenous Nagars, Iyakkars and even Vijayan had been Hindus. From this, it becomes clear that only a section of the original Hindu inhabitants of Ceylon converted to Buddhism during the latter part of Thevanampiya Theesan's reign.

The language spoken by the original Dravidian inhabitants was "Eela" or "Eelapashai." As it is now found that the Iyakkara King Ravanana was a Tamilian, it goes without saying that what was referred to as "Eelapashai" was in fact the Tamil language. As such, the language spoken by the Misira clan before the arrival of Buddhism also must have been Tamil. It was the intermixing of the Pali language that came from North India with the Buddhist religion and the indigenous Tamil language that had given birth to the Sinhala dialect, as could be seen from the numerous Tamil words found in the

Sinhalese language. By the year 1000 AD, it had developed into a grammatical language.²

Because the language of the aboriginal people of the country happened to be “**Eela**” or “**Eelapashai**,” the island of Ceylon came to be called “**Eelam**.” This name became corrupted by the passage of time to become “**Seelam**,” and later as “**Sihalam**” and “**Sinkalam**.” The Arabian names of “**Silamdeep**” and “**Serandib**,” and the names “**Selan**” and “**Ceylon**” given to the country by Westerners, are all derivations from the word “**Seelam**.” Likewise, the physical appearances of the Sinhalese people, their religions, and their language also must have gone through a series of changes.

The other racial group living in Ceylon is the **Tamils**. These people had been living in the island even before the time of recorded history. Even though the traditional areas of Tamils are now confined to the **North and Eastern Provinces**, they had populated the whole country in the pre-historic era. The language they speak is **Tamil**. They are mainly Hindus, but there are also people belonging to almost all the many different Christian denominations found in the world today. The aboriginal population of Nagars and Iyakkars were Dravidians. The Tamils of the present day are descendants of those aboriginal people.

Even though people from South India, forced to flee their homeland due to internal strife and internecine warfare, had arrived in Ceylon from time to time and integrated with the local population, the descendants of Nagars and Iyakkars are still distinctively referred to as

² Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, The History of Jaffna

“**Ceylon Tamils**.” This is another proof that Ceylon Tamils are an indigenous population.

There is ample evidence to support that Dravidian Tamils had been living in this country even before the birth of Christ. **H. W. Codrington** says in his book, “**A Short History of Ceylon**,” that the history of Ceylon really starts from the time of Ramayana. Providing credibility to Codrington’s observations are the many place names that are in vogue even today. Place names like **Nuwara Eliya**, **Sita Eliya**, **Seethawaka**, and **Ravanan Veddu** serve as a reminder to the connection this country had with the Dravidian Tamil king Ravanan and the epic of “**Ramayana**.”

Earliest history of Ceylon, and references to its aboriginal inhabitants, can be found in “**Ramayana**,” which is considered as one of the foremost epics of the ancient world. There are, of course, historians who have taken the position that, epics, for lack of concrete evidence, are all imaginations of some fertile mind. But, current cultural, linguistic and religious behaviour of races and people are but reflections of the backgrounds of ancient scriptures and epics. At the same time, historians, who researched Indian civilizations and cultures, had confirmed that the events mentioned in the two ancient Indian epics of “**Ramayana**” and “**Maha Bharatha**” were, in fact, real events.

The International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilisations, in a research articles titled “**Ancient India**,” had mentioned, “**The question arises, since both Ramayana and Bharatha are true histories, do they refer to the heritage of the Tamils in any way? Yes, they do refer in good detail and they are quite irrefutable evidences of the hoary heritage of the Tamils**

way back to 5000 BC.” This is just one of many examples where Western scholars engaged in research had confirmed the truthfulness of ancient epics.

The Dravidian King Ravana was a Tamil monarch. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, the supreme Hindu deity. He is said to have possessed the knowledge of Brahmins and the strength of Rakshasas. In addition to his knowledge of the four Vedas, he was also an accomplished musician. People who were called Brahmins during the Ramayana period had nothing whatsoever to do with any caste. During that period, all the people who were well versed in all four Vedas were called Brahmins. Ravana is said to have been well versed not only in the Vedas but also in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit.

Researchers say, the Ceylon that was ruled by Ravana was actually situated 500 miles west of the present-day Ceylon. From the same sources, it has come to light that Tamils had been living in Ceylon even before the time of Valmiki Ramayana, which was 4400 BC³.

Even prior to 4000 BC, people of the Nagar race had been living in South India and Ceylon. Proof of this can be found in the section of Mahavamsa that describes Lord Buddha's visit to Ceylon. Time of Buddha was 1800 BC⁴ and Mahavamsa describes Lord Buddha as having visited Ceylon three times. During his second visit to Ceylon, Lord Buddha is said to have mediated a peace settlement between two warring Nagar kings, Mahotharan and Sulotharan, and also had conducted sermons and preached his doctrine to three million Nagars. This

³ Dr. N. Mahalingam, General Editor, *Ancient India*, p110

⁴ Dr. N. Mahalingam, General Editor, *Ancient India*, p190

incident is mentioned not only in Mahavamsa, but also in many other local classics, such as “Manimekalai.” If Mahavamsa is to be taken as an authoritative source, it serves as confirmation that millions of people belonging to the Nagar race had been living in Ceylon even before recorded history. It is also believed that initially Ceylon was a very much larger island, but got reduced to its present size by natural disasters, such as shifting of the continental shelf and the subsiding of the ocean bed.

The Nagars were Tamils. The Tamil people observe not only their ancient customs and culture but also their ancient religious rituals even today. Names of people and places denoting the Nagar roots are in abundance. Recent archaeological discoveries also have proved that **Tamils were the original inhabitants of Ceylon.**

Splits among these aboriginal people began to appear only with the arrival of foreigners from time to time. Vijayan, a foreigner who came to Ceylon in 543 BC, married Kuveni - a girl from the aboriginal Iyakkar clan. Her lust for Vijayan caused the downfall and disappearance of Iyakkar clan, one of the original Dravidian races that lived in the country. The different clans among the Dravidian race, which had lived in unity up to that time, began to drift apart with the arrival of Vijayan to the country. At a later date, because of the friendly relationship between Thevanampiya Theesan and Emperor Asoka of Kalingam, Buddhism was able to take root in the country, and caused many a Hindu to convert to Buddhism. This created further divisions and polarization.

With the advent of the **Portuguese** rule in the 15th century, followed by the **Dutch** and later by the **British**, a substantial number of Hindus converted to Christianity as

well. Caste prejudices were at its peak in the Hindu society during that period, and quite a large number of people embraced Christianity as a way out from caste-based oppression. There were also people who embraced Christianity for economic, employment and educational reasons. But, the people who converted to Christianity did not abandon their original names. They continued to use their original names together with their Christian names. They also did not abandon their culture or heritage. Intermarriages between Christians and Hindus are also not very uncommon. But the fact remains that a separation along religious lines took place following the arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch and the British. The internecine rivalry, jealousy and enmity between local rulers also contributed to the split in the ancient Dravidian race along religious, linguistic, and cultural lines.

The above mentioned are the causes for the present situation of Dravidian Tamils becoming a minority in their own land. Internal wars between Sinhalese and Tamil kings served only to polarize the population, making the Tamils to move to the north and east, whilst the Sinhalese concentrated in the rest of the country. This resulted in only the northern and eastern parts of the island to be considered as the traditional homeland of the Tamils. In the beginning, these north and east areas of Ceylon were known as **North-Ceylon kingdom** or **Utharathesam (Northern Land)**, and was ruled by Tamil kings. There are instances on record that such Tamil kings had even ruled the entire country during certain periods of time.

A category of Tamil people known as **Indian Tamils** or **Hill Country Tamils** live in the central hilly regions of Ceylon. These people were brought from South India in the 18th century AD by the British rulers to work in

their tea and rubber plantations. The descendants of these people are the present-day Upcountry Tamils. The majority of these people are Hindus. Another race that inhabits Ceylon is the **Muslims**. They are followers of the Islam, but their mother tongue is Tamil. Between the 8th and 13th centuries, there was widespread trade between Ceylon and countries of the East and the West. The most notable among these traders were the Arabs. Some of the Arab males, who came to Ceylon for commerce and trade, married Tamil women and settled down in the country. At present they are living in both Tamil and Sinhalese areas. In addition, Tamils who converted to Islam following the conquest of South India by Muslim rulers also migrated to Ceylon and settled down here. Likewise, Muslims, who migrated from the island of Java in Indonesia, are also living in Ceylon.

The other noticeable minority race in Ceylon is the **Burghers (Eurasians)**. Portuguese who first came to Ceylon as traders in 1505 AD, later became its rulers. So did the Dutch, who later appropriated the country from the Portuguese. The Portuguese and Dutch males, who came to trade and later settled down to rule the country, also married local Ceylonese women. The present-day Burghers are the descendants of such Portuguese and Dutch fathers and Ceylonese mothers. They are all Christians.

Other Names of Ceylon

From the notes, diaries and records maintained by famous ancient foreign travelers and explorers, and from ancient stone inscriptions and artefacts, it had been found that Ceylon was known by various names, at various

periods of time, by various different nationalities. “Eelam” seems to be the most ancient of all. The other names were “Eelamandalam,” “Nagatheevu,” “Kuberanadu,” “Kumarinadu,” “Eelanadu,” “Ravanan Nadu,” “Iyakkatheevu,” “Rathnathuveepam,” “Thamira - varuny,” “Tharsis,” “Thabovanam,” “Kunathisai,” “Sirikuvo,” “Siliyavo,” “Ceylon,” “Palasimundu,” and “Mummudicholamandalam.” Out of these, the name “Ceylon” had been the most popular one among the foreigners in recent times, and they had always referred to this country as “Sailon,” or “Ceylon.” Both, the names “Lanka” and “Ilankai,” originated from “Lankapuri,” which was also one of names by which this country was known. But, it is the name “Eelam,” that appears in all ancient Tamil literature.

Ceylon in Antiquity

A glimpse of ancient world maps would show the antiquity of Ceylon. According to **Alfred Wagner**, the famous German geologist, the original landmass of the world had consisted of only two continents – **Gonawanaland** and **Laurasia**; and the present positions of continents and islands came about as the result of continental drifts and various other natural phenomena.

Researchers are of the opinion that Ceylon was part of a larger landmass and became separated from it and also shrank in size because of a rise in sea level. “Marine biologists are actually of the opinion that the sea had risen in prehistoric times and separated India from Ceylon and the tradition of the Tamils, the very people who inhabited the submerged country and who alone could have

witnessed the event be given credence. This must have happened about 5400 BC,” says E. L. Thambimuthu in his book, “Dravida.” **J. E. Tennent**, in his book “Ceylon” had also noted that “a cataclysmic landslip in 504 BC during the reign of King Banduvasa when India was completely separated from Sri Lanka.”

This ancient landmass, known to the Westerners as “Lemuria,” is referred to as “**Kumarinadu**” and “**Kumarikkandam**” in Tamil classics. This area is supposed to have included the entire Asia, with the present-day Africa as the western border and Australia as the southern border. That was the situation when the First, Middle and the Last “**Thamil Sangams**” were actively engaged in the development of the Tamil language. It is the written records of these “Sangams” that are now helping scholars and researchers to trace the ancient history of the Tamils.

Analyses of the written records of these “Sangams” clearly show, what was referred to as “Eelu” or “Eelamoli” (Eelam Language) in those records, was, in fact, the ancient Tamil language. The period of the First Sangam was from 6500 BC to 4800 BC; the Mid Sangam was from 4800 BC to 2800 BC; and the Last Sangam was from 2800 BC to 500 BC. It is on record that **Eelathu Poothanthavar**, a Tamil scholar from Ceylon, had taken part in the deliberations of the Last Sangam. This is a clear indication that Tamil was a well-developed language in Ceylon even during the period of Thamil Sangams.

Stirapho (74 BC to 24 BC), and **Ptolomi** (119 BC to 161 BC), had made references to Kumarikkandam. In the book “**Perips**”, which was written in 77 BC, “Kumari” is mentioned as an island as well as a port. Sangam

records show that there had been two rivers called Kumari and Pahruli in the now-submerged Kumarikandam. In the Sangam classic, "**Pura-Nanooru**," there is a line in a poem by poet Neddimayar that says, "**May you live for many a year on the sandy banks of River Pahruli.**" The Tamil Buddhist priest, **Illanko**, in his classic, "**Silapathikaram**," had described the submersion of Kumarikkandam under the ocean as, "Kumarikodu, the blessed land of Pahruli river and surrounding mountains, got swallowed by the cruel sea." This submersion of Kumarikkandam was also mentioned in "**Kalithohai**," another classic of the Sangam period. Included in the submersion during the aforesaid global catastrophe were **Musiri**, **Pathalam** and **Kumarinadu**. Among the areas that escaped from going under the sea are the present-day Ceylon and Tamil Nadu in South India.

The period of time, Dravidian King Ravana ruled Ceylon, is popularly known as the era of Thirethayuham. Kaliyuham (The Reign of Saturn) began in 3120 BC. As the time of Ramayana was 4400 BC, the time of Ravana's rule must also have been in this period. In the map of Kumarikkandam published by **The International Society for Investigations of Ancient Civilization**, Ravana's Ceylon is shown as a part of Kumarikkandam. In the Third Century BC, during the time **Nagar King Thissan** ruled the area called **Kalyani**, a large area on the western shores of Ceylon had gone under the sea in another natural calamity. With that, the island got isolated even further. It is believed that similar incidents had happened on two earlier occasions as well. In 150 AD, Kaviripoompatinam in South India had gone under the sea in another such incident.

From the incidents noted above, it becomes clear how Ceylon, which was a part of India in ancient times, came to be separated from the mainland and became an island as we know it now. Evidences to show the antiquity of Ceylon are found in plenty in most of the ancient classics. According to Ramayana, Lankapuri was established in Utharakandam by Kubera's carpenter by the name of Visvakarman, who later handed it over to Ravana.

The Book, "**Ancient India**" notes with evidence that both the epics, **Ramayana** and **Maha Bharatha** were based on historical facts and the incidents mentioned were all real. About the land area of Ceylon and Ravana, who ruled the country, the author of "**Old Ravana's Lanka 500 miles West of Modern Ceylon**" says, "I must now take you to the true history of Ravana, a good Tamil and an excellent Sivabakthan. Ravana's ancestors were driven South from North of Vindhya and perforce, they had no retreat far South and found an empire in the Old Tamilagam which extended, as already stated, from West of Modern Lanka up to the western edge of Madagascar near Africa."

The Origin of the Name, "Eelam."

The island of Ceylon was called by the name **Eelam** in ancient times. This could be seen on ancient stone inscriptions and ancient coins. A line in the book "**Paddinappalai**," reads, "The impact of forests on food production in Eelam." Mentions of Eelam are also found in ancient stone inscriptions of the Pandiyas. In inscriptions on a stone unearthed in the ancient capital of Ceylon,

Anuradhapura, mention is made about the then monitory units of Eelam. The words “Eela” and “Eelza” are found on ancient pottery discovered at **Punakari** in Jaffna. These words denote “**Eelam**,” the ancient name of Ceylon. These are some of the evidence of ancient Tamil habitation in the country.

Although Ceylon had been known by numerous other names, the name “**Eelam**” seems to have been the most ancient of them all, and also the most widely used one. The aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon had been using the language, “**Eelu**.” This had also been referred to as “**Elu**” in some writings. It was from these words, the names “**Eelam**” and “**Eelamandalam**” were derived. With the passage of time, “**Eelam**” became “**Seelam**,” “**Sihalam**,” and in the end became “**Sinkalam**.” It was from the word “**Seelam**,” the Arabian names, “**Seelamtheep**,” and “**Serendib**” came about⁵. The names “**Siliyavo**,” “**Selang**” and “**Ceylon**” are Western corruption of the word “**Seelam**”⁶. According to Dr. S. K Sittampalam, it was the name “**Eelam**” which is referred to as “**Sekala**” in Pali, and as “**Simhala**” in Sanskrit⁷.

Ancient Ceylon

There were two clear divisions in ancient Ceylon. The northern area was known as **Nagatheepam**, and the southern area was called “**Thambapannai**” and “**Thamiraparni**.” At times, all these three names had also been used to denote the whole island.

⁵ Mudaliyar S. Rasanayakam, *History of Jaffna*

⁶ K. P. Ratnam, *Tamil Eela Struggle*

⁷ Dr. S. K. Sittampalam, *History of Eelam Tamils*

Nagatheepam or Nagatheevu

The northern area of Ceylon was, at one time, known as **Nagatheepam** or **Nagatheevu**. These names came into vogue, as **Nagars** were the dominant race at that period of time. There are differences of opinions about the extent of Nagatheepam. W. Kaiker is of the opinion that Nagatheepam referred to the Northern Province of Ceylon⁸. and H. Parker says that this name refers to the whole northern region of Ceylon⁹. But, from evidences found in some of the prominent classics, there is reason to believe that Nagatheepam referred to only the island of Nainativu in Northern Ceylon.

The areas to the north of Kathampanathi (Aruvi Aru), Nagapokkunai, and Thirikoodam were known as Nagatheepam. Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, and Mullaitivu come within this entity. References to Nagatheevu or Nagatheepa are also found in the Mahavansa and the “**Golden Inscriptions of Vallipuram**,” an ancient gold plate unearthed in the village of Vallipuram. It is on record in ancient documents that during the time a king by the name of **Vasapan** had ruled Anuradhapura from 127 AD to 171 AD, Nagatheepam was under the reign of **King Isakiriyana**.

Thamiraparni

There was also a time in ancient times, the southern part of Ceylon was known by the names of **Thambapannai** or **Thamiraparni**. This refers to the areas south of the

⁸ W. Geiger, *Culture in Medieval Times*

⁹ H. Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*

place where Kathampa River and a tributary of Mahaveli Ganga meet. At the same time, foreigners had been using the name Thamiraparni to mean the whole country.

There was a reason for Greek, Roman, and Arabian sailors referring to Ceylon as Thamiraparni. These sailors, entering the Indian Ocean from the west, found all the main ocean currents flowing most of the time towards the west coast of Thamiraparni. This made Thamiraparni a popular terminology among the mariners who found it convenient to use it to refer to the whole island as well. This practice of calling the whole island as Thamiraparni spread to other areas as well, and that name began to appear in maps and documents.

The writings of geographers and astronomers like **Erathosthinis**, **Claudius**, and **Ptolemy**, all of whom lived in the second century BC, help us to know some of the ancient names by which Ceylon had been called. **Erathosthinis called it Taprobane**, whilst **Claudius referred to it as Taprabane** in the world maps they created. Mahavansa calls it Thamiraparni and Thambapanna¹⁰. The Greek ambassador, **Megathini**, who was accredited to the court of Chandragupta Morian, in his book about India, **referred to Ceylon as Thappirapanam**.

There were also many other reasons for Ceylon being referred to as Thamiraparni. From the name of River Thammana in the southeast of Ceylon, the country was also referred to as Thampanni by some. Mahavansa had also connected the name Thamiraparni to Vijayan, the central character of that epic, who together with his followers was banished from their native land of Kalingam in India. On

¹⁰ The Mahavansa, Chapter vi (English)

landing at some place in Thamiraparni, Vijayan is said to have taken a well deserved rest by sitting on the ground leaning on his hand for support, and whilst doing so, his palms had become smeared with the red coloured fertile soil of that region. On account of that incident, that area was supposed to have been named Thambapanni (Thamiram in Tamil means copper colour). But, this explanation does not seem very satisfactory. Some scholars are of the view that Thamiraparni is a Sanskrit word, and Thambapanni is its Tamil variation.

Even though there had been a number of similar theories, many researchers had concluded that this name came about because of the connection this country had with India. In the district of Thirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, South India, there is a river by the name of **Thamiraparni**. This river flows through an ancient human settlement called **Athichanallur**, and empties itself in the Gulf of Mannar in the Indian Ocean. Konanathi (Gal Oya) river in Ceylon lies straight to the south of this Indian river. Some researchers had identified Thamiraparni as the area between the two rivers, Konanathi and Kathampanathi (Aruvi Aru).

Talaimannar in Ceylon and Rameswaram in India had been connected by an isthmus¹¹. Transmigration, of Indian people to Ceylon, and Ceylonese people to India, would have taken place via this isthmus till it also went underwater in one of those natural calamities. The theory that people from Thamiraparni in India, who migrated to Ceylon, would have given the name of their original homeland to their new country for sentimental reasons seems to be more feasible than the reason given in Mahavansa that Ceylon got the name of Thamiraparni after the arrival of Vijayan. There are also records to show that people from Thamiraparni (in India) had been coming to Ceylon even prior to the arrival of Vijayan, to work as pearl divers in the local pearl fisheries. Even before the 5th century BC, Ceylon had been known to foreigners as Thamiraparni.

¹¹ Dr. N. Mahalingam, *Ancient India*, pp.77, 79

Aboriginal Inhabitants of Ceylon

It had been almost a tradition among many historians to treat the arrival of Vijayan to Ceylon as the beginning of the country's history. For reasons best known only to them, or because of some ulterior motive, they conveniently forgot or purposely ignored the existence of the aboriginal people who had been living in the country when Vijayan arrived. There had also been other inconsistencies in the recorded history about these pre-historic inhabitants. But, recent archaeological discoveries, and researches carried out based on those discoveries, seem to confirm the fact that Iyakkars and Nagars are the original inhabitants of Ceylon. It has also been proved that these Nagars and Iyakkars were of Dravidian lineage. Mention has been made about this Iyakkar race of Dravidian descent in the famous epic, Ramayana. Description of a warrior of Nagar race is found on a rock carving discovered in the caves of Bambarakanthalawa in the Eastern Province of Ceylon. This inscription is estimated to have been made during the 2nd century BC.

Based on the evidence gathered through archaeology and from ancient writings, it can be confirmed that Ceylon originally belonged to the Dravidian people, and that they started splintering only after the arrival of foreigners in 483 BC.

Nagar

Before the arrival of Vijayan to the island of Ceylon, there had been a well-developed Dravidian

civilization in the country. In the Pali epic, Mahavansa, it is said that people of the Nagar race had been living in the Kelani area of the south as well as in the northern areas of Ceylon. Of those, who were living in the north had a well-established and strong kingdom of their own. Because of that, North Ceylon was known by the name, Nagatheepam. Various classes (or castes) of people, like **Eyinar**, **Oviyar**, **Aruvalar**, **Parathavar**, and **Kammiyar** lived in that kingdom. They were brave warriors and were also well-versed in arts and crafts.

Ravanar's wife - Mandothari, Kuberan's wife - Sithirarekai, and Soorapanman's wife - Pathumakomalai were all Nagar women. The "Pudpahavimanam" used by Kuberan, and the "Ahayavoorthy" used by Ravanar when he took Seethai forcibly from her forest retreat in India to Lanka, were said to have been built by the skilled Kammar caste artisans of Nagar race from Manthai district.¹² Both those vehicles are said to be flying machines. The people of the Oviyar caste were well known for their artistic talents. The word "Oviyam" came to be used for art and paintings because of this reason. Rock paintings and frescos done by these people can still be found in some of the caves in Ceylon. Because of these, Viviliyanool had referred to Ceylon as Oviyarthesam.

Ancient classics and chronicles are full of similar examples. Mentions of these activities in the classics and chronicles are evidence of the glorious heritage of ancient Ceylon. Such evidences found not only in the classics but also in historical records go to prove that Nagars were the original inhabitants of Ceylon.

¹² Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam.

According to Mahavansa, Lord Buddha, on his second visit to Ceylon, had brought about an amicable settlement to the conflict between **Mahotharan** and **Soolotharan**, two kings of that time. This incident is also mentioned in Manimekalai, one of the five Great Classics. Mention is also made about the Nagar King Maniyakkiyan, who had been ruling the Kalyani kingdom along the shores of Kelani River.

In many of the notes made by foreign visitors to ancient Ceylon too, mentions had been made about the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon. The most notable evidence can be seen in the world map drawn by Ptolemy. Fahien, a 5th century traveler to Ceylon, had also made mention about the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon. He had described that Fairies and Nagars lived in Ceylon, and that they had maintained trade relations with many foreign countries. This shows that the Nagar race had a well-developed commerce, economic system and civilization even in those days for them to have established trade relations with foreign countries. **Devinuwara**, **Nagarkovil**, **Thirukovil**, and **Nanigiri**, in the south; **Nagathuma**, **Medawachchi** (Mahavillachchi), in the southeast; **Nainativu**, **Kankesanthurai** (Jambukkolam), **Vallipuram**, **Kurunthankulam**, **Mihintale**, **Nagasathukkam**, **Kantharodai** (Kathiramalai), **Kariyalai**, **Nagapaduwan**, **Mahatheertham** (Manthai), in the north, are some of the Nagar settlements. The fact that these settlements had their own individual chieftains stands as evidence for the advanced social and political organization of the Nagars.

The Nagars had been practicing some sort of nature-worship, and the main objects of veneration were king cobras, and the veneration of cobras was not confined only

to the Nagars. This had been found to be a practice among many aboriginal people all over the world. Historians who researched Naga culture had described the rituals connected with cobra-worship in detail. Idols of cobra-worship in the form of statues can be seen even today at Abayagiri Vihare and the Sethavana Vihare in Anuradhapura. According to **Parkushan**, who was one of the authors of these records, Nagars had been worshiping cobras for healing sicknesses and also for luck. Statues of cobras found in these two Buddhist temples provide credibility to his writings. This also goes to prove that Nagars had inhabited these areas as well. There is also reason to believe that these two Buddhist vihares may have been temples for Cobra Deities earlier and later converted to Buddhist places of worship after the advent of Buddhism.

The Tamil word "**Nakareekam**," which means civilization, is said to have been coined to denote the superior civilization of the Nagars. The Tamils are still following many of the customs of ancient Nagars. The floral arrangements decorating the plaited hair of Tamil women are called "**Sadainagam**," which means "**hair-cobra**" or "**cobra hair style**." **Turbans** of the Tamil males are made to resemble the hood of king cobras. Male names, like **Nagarajah**, **Naganathan**, etc., and female names, like **Nagammah**, **Nagarani**, **Nagavalli**, etc., have come down the line from the ancient cobra-worshipping Nagars. The aboriginal Dravidian people of Eelam had also followed a custom of burying their dead in tray-shaped utensils, which were called "trays of the elders." Many such artifacts had been unearthed from ancient gravesites in different parts of the country.

Kantharodai (Kathiramalai) in the Jaffna district of northern Ceylon, had been the seat of government for many

Nagar rulers. There had been many similar kingdoms in other parts of the country as well.

Iyakkars

The other indigenous and aboriginal race of Ceylon was the **Iyakkars**. This race too was Dravidian. The people were Shivites, or in other words, worshipers of Lord Shiva as their main deity. They were a strong military power, and inhabited the central and southern parts of the country. References are made in Ramayana, one of the two great epics of India, about their military superiority and to their famous king, **Ravannan**. He is described as an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. Ravannan is said to have worshiped at **Thirukoneswaram** temple in the Eastern Province, and to have dug the hot-water springs in Kinniya close by. The very deep rift in the rocks adjoining Thirukoneswaram temple in Trincomalee is known as Ravanan Veddu.

Because of internal rivalry, enmity and warfare, this strong and politically advanced race lost its uniqueness and identity, and got integrated with the descendents of Vijayan. The process of integration began with the marriage of Vijayan to Kuveni – a woman of the Iyakkar clan. The marriage is said to have taken place in the town of **Srissavathu**¹³, where Vijayan and his friends, with the connivance of Kuveni, murdered all the leading members of the Iyakkar race who came to attend the wedding. After thus eliminating all possible opposition, he renamed all the Iyakkar settlements with names of his choice. The lust of

¹³ Senkai Alziyan, *Kuveni*

Kuveni was the cause and the beginning of the downfall of the Ceylonese Dravidian race.

Vijayan's friend, Anuradha, renamed one of the settlements, **Anuradhagama**; **Vijitha** named another one, **Vijithagama**; and **Uruwela** named yet another one, **Uruwelagama**. There are many others like the ones mentioned above. Research shows that these places were already well-established settlements before the renaming took place¹⁴.

After establishing his authority in the new country, Vijayan abandoned Kuveni, and took a Pandiyan princess as his queen. Her friends were brought down to marry Vijayan's friends. The second wife of Vijayan, by virtue of being a Pandiyan princess from southern India, was also a Dravidian. Historians during Vijayan's time, and even later, suppressed the Dravidian connection, thus twisting the country's history.

The author of "Deepavansa" had written that, two thousand five hundred years ago, Ceylon had been a land of dense forests inhabited only by ghosts and rakshasas (ogres).¹⁵ But, Prof. Paul Peiris (a Sinhalese scholar) had pointed out that 2500 years ago there had been five Sivan Temples in Ceylon. To say a country being inhabited by ghosts and ogres, when it was actually inhabited by a highly civilized, cultured and religious race, is not just intellectual dishonesty; it is a pure and simple case of affront and insult to human intelligence.

¹⁴ Dr. K. Kunarasa, *History of Eelamites* (Tamil)

¹⁵ Dipavansa, Oldenberg's Translation

It can only be concluded that Deepavansa was written with the sole object and calculated intention of erasing from memory and history books, the fact that Dravidian people had been living in Ceylon long before the founding of the Sinhalese race by Vijayan. It is said that the Sinhala language had come in use during the first century AD. Mahavansa and Deepavansa had been written in the sixth century AD. These books intentionally failed to provide true information about the Dravidian presence and its influence over the destiny of the country before the arrival of Vijayan.

From archaeological findings, and from conclusive evidence gathered from ancient classics and chronicles, it has now become possible to conclude without even an iota of doubt that the aboriginal inhabitants of Eelam were Dravidian, and the present-day Sinhalese and Tamil races are their descendents.

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The Dravidian Culture in Eelam

In the beginning, the aboriginal races of Nagars and Iyakkars had lived together in harmony. Both these races were Dravidian in origin, with Tamil as their common language and Hinduism as their common religion. Arrival of Vijayan to the country brought about the parting of their ways, and differences began to develop in their cultural and social behaviour. This process gained momentum and intensified with the entry of Buddhism and the Pali language with it. The end result was two completely different races separated by language, religion and culture. Religious and racial bias infiltrated into the thought process of the people and caused the true history of the country to disappear from world view and public discourse. The information purposely hidden from the people by earlier historians are now coming to light through archaeology and research.

Sir Paul Peiris confirms that there had been human settlements in the north of Ceylon many centuries before Vijayan was even born. Dravidian settlements had been denser in the northern area of Nagatheevu. Skeletons of *homo sapiens*, estimated to be between 15,000 and 30,000 years old, have been discovered in the Balangoda area. This is another proof that human race had been living in Ceylon even during pre-historic times. When this was the real situation, on what basis did the historians and Mahavansa decide that no human beings lived in Ceylon before the arrival of Vijayan? Were they simply one-sided? Or, were they racially motivated?

The original culture of Eelam was Dravidian. Sources from many a narrative can be quoted as examples. Burying their dead, erecting of monuments at burial sites, stone coverings over graves, headstones for graves, etc., denote Dravidian customs. Many such burial relics have been unearthed in recent times at Tissamaharama. It has been found those people had used clay vessels to bury their dead, which were known as "Elders Trays" or "Elders Pots." These burial customs were practiced more than 2000 years ago. Such clay vessels had been found in many parts of Ceylon and also in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu. Most of these relics had been found in a place called **Athichanallur**, situated near the banks of **Thamiraparni River** in the Thirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Archaeological excavations had been carried out at Anuradhapura in the years 1969, 1984, and 1990; at Kantharodai in Jaffna and at Pomparippu in the Puttlam district in the year 1970; and at Manthai, Mankulam, Balangoda, and Tissamaharama in the year 1980. Those archaeological undertakings have brought to light the ancient history and the cultural antiquity of the aboriginal people of Ceylon. It is also found from the relics discovered, that an era known as the Lesser Stone Age and another known as the Greater Stone Age had existed in Ceylon and South India during the same period of time

American Professor, John Caswell of the University of Pennsylvania, who took part in the archaeological excavations at Manthai, found quartz weapon-heads, which he estimated to have belonged to a period in between the Lesser Stone Age and the Greater Stone Age. That would have been around 28,000 BC. At the same time, "Elders Trays" had been found in **Pomparippu, Anaicoddai, Paranthan, Ippangamuwa, Pathiyagampola, Kalmunai,**

Kitulgala, Kuruwita, Pathathompalanna, and **Paranthan** areas, which are also evidences of Dravidian culture.

The existence of Brahmi alphabets is yet another evidence to show that Dravidian culture had existed in ancient Ceylon. The present Tamil alphabets had evolved from the Brahmi script, and a mixture of Brahmi and Tamil alphabets had been used in the interim period. Many records still exist written in Tamil-Brahmi script. Some ancient pottery had been discovered at **Kantharodai** with inscriptions only in the Brahmi language. With these were found pieces of other black and red pottery that had Tamil-Brahmi language inscriptions.

Chronicles written in the Tamil-Brahmi language during the third century BC had brought to light huge amounts of information about ancient Ceylon. From them it was learnt that there had been small Tamil kingdoms in North Ceylon as well as to the south of Anuradhapura, with a political system very similar to the ones found in South India.

Vijayan had ruled Ceylon only for a short period, and his seat of government was never at Anuradhapura. According to Mahavansa, Bandukabaya, the grandson of Banduvasu, a younger brother of Vijayan, was the first king to have made Anuradhapura his capital. But it has come to light through archaeological excavations in the Kathambanathi areas that Anuradhapura had been a settlement of the Nagars and had been under their jurisdiction even before the reign of Bandukabaya. These early settlements in that city belonged to the Greater Stone Age.

Greater Stone Age was during 1000B.C. Historian H. Paker in his book "Ancient Ceylon" describes this period. At Punakari, ancient earthen pottery bearing the words "Eelza" and "Eelaa" in Brahmi alphabets had been unearthed. From some of the ancient Brahmi stone inscriptions, it had been found that the religion of aboriginal Dravidians was a sort of Hinduism with nature-worship as its main theme. Proper names used during this period also stand as proof of this theory. **King Moothasivan** had ruled Ceylon from 307 to 247 BC with Anuradhapura as his capital. The names of his sons had been **Mahanagan, Mahasivan** and **Theesan**. It was this Theesan who embraced Buddhism in 247 BC, and came to be known as **Thevanampiya Theesan** (which means, Theesan, the believer in God). Scholars, who did research on ancient proper names, confirm that these names are not only Tamil in origin but are also connected with the Hindu religion. According to Mahavansa, there had been Sivalinga Temples in those areas and the people of those areas had practiced worship of Sivalingam. Former Archaeological Commissioner, Senarath Paranavithana, had referred to these temples as "Houses of Lingam." The names like Moothasivan and Mahasivan goes to prove that the Nagar kings had been followers of the Hindu religion. Some of them might have later converted to Buddhism. Likewise, a section of the Tamil-speaking Hindu population also became Tamil Buddhists during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan. The discovery of Buddhist relics at Kantharodai in Jaffna confirms this fact.

Discovery of Buddhist relics in Tamil regions does not mean that Sinhalese Buddhists had lived in those areas. There were Tamil Buddhists living in Ceylon and India. **Seethali Chathanar**, the author of **Manimekalai**, which is considered as one of the Five Great Classics, was a

Buddhist. The poet, who wrote **Sithanthathohai**, and many other famous writers of that period, like **Vajrapothy, Buddhananthy, Buddhakappiyar, Buddhathathar, and Tharmapalar** were also Tamil Buddhists.

There are evidences of Tamil Buddhist priests from India coming to Ceylon to spread Buddhism. **Makothai Tharmapalan**, a Tamil Buddhist priest, had been a resident preacher at Maha Vihare in Anuradhapura. A stone inscription about him is found in the South Indian section at the Anuradhapura museum.¹⁶ Later, Hindu Tamils had also converted to other religions from time to time.

It is seen that aboriginal Dravidian people had also practiced sun-, tree-, animal-, river-, earth-, and cobra-worship. Hindus practice such rituals even today. Famous Buddhist dagobas found in Ceylon had all been built at the sites of ancient places of nature worship. According to the historian, Paranavithana, Duparama Dagoba - the first Buddhist monument to be erected in Ceylon - was built at the site of **Yakshmahesan Temple** of the Yakkar race.¹⁷

From the evidences mentioned above, it is clear that Dravidian races of Nagars and Iyakkars were the autochthonous people of Ceylon, that they were originally Hindus by religion, and the Eelam Tamilians are the descendants of the aboriginal Nagars.

¹⁶ South Indian Inscriptions, No.1406, Vol.IV

¹⁷ K. Sittampalam, "Yaksha Worship in Ancient Eelam"

Kings Who Ruled Eelam before the Birth of Christ

Some of the incidents mentioned in the early history of Eelam covering periods of time before the Birth of Christ seem contradictory, and some have the semblance of fables. A majority of historians, who undertook the writing of Eelam history, had taken Mahavansa and Choolavansa as their primary source. Mahavansa and Choolavansa had given prominence only to the Anuradhapura kingdoms and for events that happened there. Their narratives centre on only on kings who ruled from Anuradhapura.

On the other hand, *Yalpana Vaipavamalai*, *Vaiyapadal*, and *Yalpana Charithiram* had given prominence to kingdoms of North Ceylon. Under these circumstances, encroachment of racial-bias would have been inevitable, and also would have served as obstacles for impartial and unbiased writing of history. Recent archaeological discoveries and unbiased analyses by contemporary archaeologists help us to see the history of Eelam of pre-Christian era in a better light than ever before. Classics and chronicles bear witness to the fact that many Iyakkars and Nagar kings, including Ravanaan, had ruled over Ceylon.

From the 3rd century to the 1st Century BC, 19 kings had ruled Ceylon. **Vijayan** is mentioned as the first one of them. **Thevanampiya Theesan**, **Senan**, **Kuthikan**, **Ellalan**, and **Thuta Gamini** are considered as having made substantial changes to the course of Eelam history. These changes are having their impact on the Eelam people even to this very day.

The Changes in Eelam following the Arrival of Vijayan

Eelam had been a land originally inhabited by the Nagars and the Iyakkars. The arrival of Vijayan, who was banished from Kalinga Nadu in India by his father, was the beginning of the many historical changes that took place. The most significant, and the most devastating, of them is the splintering of the aboriginal Dravidian races, the Nagars and Iyakkars. It is said that the place where Vijayan landed was Thampirarni region¹⁸. Some of the historians had disputed it and written that the place of Vijayan's landing was in the area of Keerimalai, which was also known as Maviddapuram or Thiruthampalai¹⁹.

According to "History of Jaffna" written by historian Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, Vijayan was a Hindu from Kalinga, and that he had built many Hindu temples and also renovated many of the existing ones. He is also said to have cultivated a friendship with the Nagar king who was ruling from Kathiramaalai.

Early Hindu inhabitants of Ceylon had built Thiruthampaleswaram (also known as Naguleswaram) on the northern coast near Keerimalai, Sandrasegaran temple on the southern coast at Deivanthurai, Thirukoneswarar temple at Thampalakamam on the eastern coast, and a temple for Murugavel at Kathiramaalai in Kathirkamam. Vijayan is also said to have done extensive renovations to

¹⁸ Dr. S. Kunnarasa, *History of Eelamites* (Tamil)

¹⁹ Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, *History of Jaffna* (Tamil)

the Thiruketheeswaram temple at Mathoddam. Thiruketheeswaram and Munneswaram are ancient temples and predate the arrival of Vijayan by centuries. There is a belief that Raman had stopped at Munneswaram and worshiped at that temple on his way back to India after defeating and killing Ravana. Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam too had quoted this incident in his book. There is no evidence at all for Vijayan having built these temples. These temples were built during some time immemorial, and were already in existence when Vijayan arrived.

The evidence for it can be seen in the writings of the famous Sinhalese scholar, Professor P. E. Peiris. In his book "Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna," he says, "Long before Vijayan arrived in Ceylon, there had been five notable places of worship in Ceylon. They are: Thiruketheeswaram near Mahathitha; Munneswaram near the pearl fisheries of Chilaw; Thandeswarar temple at Mathoddam; Thirukoneswarar temple opposite the gulf of Koddiam; and Naguleswaram near Kankesanthurai." This is ample proof that Hindu religion was already in existence in Ceylon at the time of Vijayan's arrival, and Tamil people who followed this religion had been living in the country.

Vijayan married Kuveni, a woman from the Iyakkar race, and with her help established a kingdom with **Tammanna** as his capital. He then destroyed many Dravidian settlements and renamed them after his friends. It was Vijayan who initiated the destruction of the aboriginal Dravidian race in Ceylon. Even though many Dravidian regions changed hands during the reign of Vijayan, there continued a stable Nagar kingdom in northern Eelam with Nagatheevu, also known as Nagatheepam, as its administrative capital. தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணச் சுவடிகள்

Even though it is said that Vijayan left Kuveni in the lurch because of his political ambitions and married the daughter of the Nagar king, who was ruling Kathiramalai, Mahavansa maintains that Vijayan married the daughter of the Pandiyan king and his colleagues married her maids. As the narrative of Mahavansa is centred mainly on the rulers of Anuradhapura, nothing authentic could be learned from it about other contemporary kingdoms that had existed in other areas of Ceylon. But recent archaeological findings have brought these facts to light.

The arrival of Vijayan to Ceylon created a split within the aboriginal inhabitants and made them into two separate cultural entities. This trend, which was started by Vijayan, can be seen to continue even today.

Rulers of Eelam after Vijayan up to the time of Thevanampiya Theesan

There had been a number of small kingdoms in Ceylon before the arrival of Vijayan. Ancient earthenware used in funeral rites and Brahmi stone inscriptions unearthed are evidences of Dravidian civilization of the Greater Stone Age that had existed in or around one thousand years before the Birth of Christ.

Vijayan was succeeded by **Panduvassudeva**, **Abhayan**, **Pandukabayan** and **Moothasivan**, followed by Thevanampiya Theesan, who ascended the throne in 247 BC. A vast amount of changes had taken place in between Vijayan's reign and that of Thevanampiya Theesan. But most of the significant changes had taken place during the reign of **Thevanampiya Theesan**.

The Changes that took place during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan

Thevanampiya Theesan ruled Eelam from year 247 to 207 BC. It was during this period of time that most of the changes in the country had taken place. The arrival of Vijayan created a split within the Dravidian people. But with the intrusion of Buddhist religion and Pali language during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan, a large number of these Dravidian people changed their religion, language, and culture. This intrusion of foreign religion and foreign language into the country during the reign of this king had immense impact on the lives of the Dravidian people, and also caused them to be separated and isolated from each other as Tamils and Sinhalese.

Even some of the Nagar kings, who were ruling over the areas in the northern part of Eelam during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan, also converted to the newly introduced Buddhist religion. During their reign, the northern part of the country came to be known as Utharathesam and southern part as Thakinathesam. Thevanampiya Theesan had Anuradhapura as his administrative capital. Emperor **Ashokan**, who ruled the North Indian kingdom of Mahathanadu, and Thevanampiya Theesan, who ruled at Anuradhapura were contemporaries. After witnessing the devastation and loss of lives in the Kalinga war, the Hindu king Ashokan not only embraced Buddhism but also devoted his entire life to spread that doctrine all over the world. It was during the reign of

Thevanampiya Theesan, Ashokan's son **Mahindan** and daughter **Sangamitha** came to Eelam to spread the teachings of Lord Buddha. On that occasion, Sangamitha had also brought a branch from the sacred Bo tree under which Buddha received enlightenment. This sapling was planted at Anuradhapura and came to be revered as Mahabodhi.

Valikamam area in the Jaffna Peninsula of Utharathesam was called **Jampatheevu**, and also by the name, **Navalantheevu**. It was here, the port - mentioned as Jampukkolapatnam in Mahavansa - was situated. According to Mahavansa, it was through this port, Sangamitha brought the branch of the sacred tree. Following the example of their king, Thevanampiya Theesan, his subjects too converted to Buddhism. At the same time, Nagar kings of North Ceylon and the Nagar king of Kathiramalai also abandoned their Hindu faith and embraced Buddhism. This gave rise to a community of **Tamil Buddhists** at Nagatheevu and many other parts of the peninsula.

The reason Buddhist relics were found at Kantharodai, Vallipuram, and Nagatheevu is because Tamil Buddhists had been living in those areas. Historians had failed to mention anything about the religion these people followed or the language they spoke before the spread of Buddhism. Research has now shed light on the heritage and history of these people.

As Thevanampiya Theesan had been ruling from Anuradhapura and propagating his newly found faith from there, this city came to be known as the place of origin of Buddhism. As Buddhist preachers from abroad and local Buddhist priests had been resident at Anuradhapura under

the patronage of those kings, it may also have been a reason for them to give such prominence to the Anuradhapura kingdom. The era of peace that prevailed during the reign of Thevanampiya Theesan would also have contributed substantially for the rapid growth of Buddhism in the country. In addition, the influence of Asoka's military might, and his close friendship with Thevanampiya Theesan also would have acted as a deterrent against possible opposition to the spread of Buddhism. This would have been the reason for the smaller kingdoms in the country to tow Thevanampiya Theesan's lines.

As Kalinga dynasty had come to an end by the time of the fifth generation after Vijayan, a mixed race of Kalingars and Nagars known as Misirars came to power in Eelam. Tamil kings also had ruled from Anuradhapura from time to time. With the birth of the Misirar race, differences between Nagars, Iyakkars and Kalingars disappeared and evolved into two different and distinct races of Tamils and Sinhalese.²⁰

The Sinhalese language that evolved from the fusion of Pali language of Buddhist literature, and the indigenous Tamil language had developed into a grammar-oriented language by the year 1000 AD. Yet, Tamil influence can still be noticed in a vast number of Sinhalese words.

Because of his admiration for the Buddhist religion, Thevanampiya Theesan concentrated more on building Buddhist temples and spreading the doctrine than in looking after the security of his kingdom. For the smaller kingdoms, which had to accept Buddhism because of possible coercion and pressure from Thevanampiya Theesan, his demise came as a godsend. They rebelled openly against the authority of the Anuradhapura kingdom and stopped paying tribute to it.

²⁰ Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, "The History of Jaffna" (Tamil)

The Reign of Senan and Kuthikan in Eelam

Two of the most notable among the minor rulers, who rebelled against the political authority of the Anuradhapura kingdom, were **Senan** and **Kuthikan**. Historians with Mahavansa-bias had referred to Senan and Kuthikan as South Indian Tamils. The authors of Mahavansa, in their narrative, had a habit of either ignoring the historical reality of the existence of Tamil kings and their achievements, or referring to them as foreign aggressors. But there is no historical evidence of any South Indian Tamil kingdom or kingdoms attacking or invading Eelam during this period of time. There is no mention of any kings by the names of Senan or Kuthikan, or their invasion of Eelam, in any South Indian historical records. As such, the only logical conclusion has to be that Senan and Kuthikan were indigenous rulers of small kingdoms in Eelam. There had been instances where minor rulers of South Ceylon had ascended the throne of Anuradhapura. Similarly, minor rulers of North Ceylon also would have become rulers of Anuradhapura.

King Soora Theesan was the ruler of the Anuradhapura kingdom when Senan and Kuthikan declared war on that kingdom. They defeated Soora Theesan and became joint-rulers of the Anuradhapura kingdom. They implemented many development schemes during their reign. The most notable was the diverting of the river Kathampanathi (Aruviyaru) towards Anuradhapura, by which agricultural production increased to unprecedented heights. Senan and Kuthikan had ruled Eelam from 177 BC to 155 BC, when Aselan defeated them and captured the kingdom from them.

Serious and extensive research is not only necessary but is also a crying need at this point of time in our history to find out conclusively whether the Tamil kings who fought wars against the Anuradhapura kingdom were invaders from South India or indigenous Tamil rulers.

The Reign of King Ellalan in Eelam

Aselan, who defeated Senan and Kuthikan and captured the Anuradhapura kingdom, ruled Eelam for ten years from 155 BC to 145 BC. Aselan was the son of Mahasivan, brother of Soora Theesan. Ellalan, another Tamil king from North Ceylon, who ruled the kingdom for 44 years with fairness and justice, then defeated him. Ellalan is known to be the son of Senan, which is confirmed by the line, 'ஈழசேனன் புத்திரன் ஏலெலன்' (**Elelan, the son of Eelasenan**) which appears in the ancient folk drama, "Elelan." Ellalan was also known as Elara, a corruption of the name "EelaRaja." Mahavansa, which trumpets the glory of the Sinhalese kings of Anuradhapura, had from start to finish downplayed the achievements of Tamil kings who ruled from Anuradhapura. Ellalan is a contemporary of the South Indian ruler, Manuneethi Cholan, who was renowned for his justice. He sentenced his son to be run over by a chariot for killing an innocent calf by running his chariot over it. As Ellalan was equally a man of justice like the South Indian ruler, many such stories are attributed to him as well.

Ellalan is described in Pali classics as a Chola prince who invaded Eelam from South India. All subsequent recorders of Ceylon history also had taken the same line, and taken them as the primary source for their Pali classics. But, there are no Indian historical records of anyone by the name of Ellalan from Chola dynasty having invaded Eelam at any time. There is not even a single mention of the name, Ellalan, in the whole history of the

Chola Empire. Taking all these into consideration, the only logical conclusion that could be drawn is that Ellalan was from North Ceylon and not from South India.

There are evidences to confirm this theory. Even before the Vijayan era, there had been powerful kingdoms in Utharathesam (North Country). Even during the period Anuradhapura kingdom was at its peak, there had been minor, but very resourceful and powerful, kingdoms in the northern part of the country. It was Ellalan who built Vavunikulam, and it would not have been possible if he was not the ruler of that area.

All the minor rulers of that time, including the southern ruler of Ruhunu, accepted the authority of Ellalan mainly because of his just and impartial rule. Ellalan's authority was later challenged by the Sinhalese king, Thuta Gamini, who declared war against him. In the direct combat between Ellalan and Thuta Gamini, Ellalan's elephant, **Mahaparvatham**, slipped and went down, and the spear thrown by Thuta Gamini found its mark killing Ellalan. This incident took place in the year 101 BC bringing to an end Ellalan's reign which began in 145 BC.

The Reign of Thuta Gamini.

Because of his victory over the Tamil king Ellalan, Thuta Gamini was described as the liberator of the Sinhalese race by the authors of Sinhalese classics, thus glorifying him out of proportion to reality. Thuta Gamini's reign lasted only 24 years. **Mahanama Thero**, the author of Mahavansa, had devoted 843 stanzas in praising Thuta Gamini, who ruled for only 24 years, and Ellalan, who ruled the country for 44 long years, is mentioned in only 21 stanzas.

Gamini's real name was **Gamini Abhayan**, and he had a brother by the name of **Satha Theesan**. His father was **Kaakavanna Theesan**, and his mother's name was **Viharama Devi**. Kaakavanna Theesan was always for friendship, co-operation and good relations with the Tamils, whereas his wife, Viharama Devi, was the opposite. Because of his rebellious character and not heeding his father's advice, Gamini Abhayan came to be known as **Thuta Gamini**. It is mentioned in the Mahavansa that one day Kaakavanna Theesan had summoned his sons and asked them to give him three promises. **The first one was to respect and obey the Buddha Sangha, the second one was that both the brothers should always be united, and the third one was not to go to war with the Tamils.**

Gamini and his brother had agreed to the first two, but refused to agree to the third one. According to Mahavansa, immediately after this encounter with his father, Gamini had gone to bed crouched in the fetal position. When his mother asked him as to why he was

sleeping in that uncomfortable position, he had replied, "When the northern areas are under the domination of the Tamils, and the south is restricted by the ocean, how could I stretch myself and sleep comfortably?"

Even though the Ruhunu kingdom was powerful during the time of Kaakavanna Theesan, it had accepted Ellalan's authority and paid tribute to him. When Thuta Gamini ascended the Ruhunu throne following his father's death, he did not favour the idea of paying tribute to Anuradhapura. After a massive conscription, which included five hundred Buddhist priests, Thuta Gamini declared war on the Anuradhapura kingdom of Ellalan.

Ellalan's governance enjoyed a great amount of respect from his subjects because of its justice and fairness. To offset Ellalan's wide popular support, Thuta Gamini started a propaganda blitz and gave numerous attractive promises to his people. His propaganda was that it was not to enjoy the luxury of a kingdom that he was declaring war but only to save the Buddha Sasana. This convinced the Buddhist population to such an extent that even Buddhist priests joined the army for the first time in history. Thuta Gamini's mother, Viharama Devi, is said to have taken an active interest in his war against Ellalan.

Most of Ellalan's larger army garrisons were stationed along the Mahaveli Ganga. But the first encounter between the two armies took place not in these areas but at Ambathirtham in Mahiyangana, where Ellalan had a single contingent. The strength of his armed forces was not the only reason for Thuta Gamini's victories in this encounter or of the others that followed. The war tactics employed by him and the part played by his mother, Viharama Devi, contributed to a large extent to his success.

Knowing Ellalan's army commander **Thithappan's** lust for women, Thuta Gamini had paraded his mother in front of him to divert his attention and defeated his army. Viharama Devi had been a willing participant in this plot, according to Mahavansa. It was by stooping to such low level, that Thuta Gamini was able to score the victory over Ellalan's forces.

After defeating Ellalan's detachment at Ambathiratham, Thuta Gamini launched his attack on Ellalan's next garrison at Vijithapura, which was supposed to be stronger than the one at Ambathiratham. It took more than four months of intense fighting before Thuta Gamini was able to overrun this garrison. Yet, the war continued for another year, by which time both the warring parties had reached a state of extreme exhaustion. As a result, Thuta Gamini suspended further attacks and temporarily stationed his army at Kasaparvatham, giving it time to rest and recoup. During this time, Ellalan's army also strengthened itself and attacked Thuta Gamini's troops stationed at Kasaparvatham. But following the death of **Theekajanthu**, their commander, the Tamil army retreated.

Following the retreat of the Tamil army, Thuta Gamini laid siege to Anuradhapura and challenged Ellalan for a duel. The seventy-two-years-old Ellalan also accepted the challenge from the youthful Thuta Gamini and entered the arena for a duel on elephant back. Whilst Ellalan was having the upper hand in the duel, Thuta Gamini cunningly edged his elephant, **Kandula**, to attack Ellalan's elephant, **Mahaparvatham**. When Mahaparvatham lost its balance in that unexpected attack, the spear thrown by Thuta Gamini struck Ellalan, and he was killed.

It must be mentioned to the credit of Thuta Gamini that he cremated Ellalan's body with full military honours and respect that was due to a "true hero", and erected a memorial on the site. He also made a royal proclamation that all processions that pass the monument should observe strict silence as a mark of respect to the dead king and hero. This was not only a recognition of Ellalan's rule of justice but also an example of the great culture that had prevailed in the country at that time.

Following his accession to the throne of Anuradhapura, Thuta Gamini defeated the rulers of the other thirty-two minor kingdoms that existed in the country at that time and brought them also under his authority. Because of it, Thuta Gamini came to be recognized by the Sinhalese masses as the monarch who contributed the most to the spread of Buddhism in the country, and also as the king who liberated the Anuradhapura kingdom from the domination of the Tamils.

The Rulers of Eelam after Thuta Gamini

From the time of the death of Ellalan in 101 BC to the year 44 BC, Anuradhapura had been ruled by Sinhalese kings. During the reign of Vadda Gamini, seven Tamil kings of minor kingdoms made a unified attack on the Anuradhapura kingdom. Theesan, the ruler of the southern kingdom of Ruhunu, also joined these Tamil kings in their attack on Anuradhapura.

Even though Theesan later switched sides and joined Vadda Gamini when Vadda Gamini promised him that he would hand over the Anuradhapura throne to him if he would join him to defeat the Tamils, they were both

defeated by the Tamil kings. After the victory, two of the seven Tamil kings returned to their former kingdoms whilst **Pulakathan, Pakian, Panayamaran, Pinayamaran** and **Thadikan** stayed behind and ruled Anuradhapura for more than fourteen years on a rotation basis.

At the time Thadikan was ruling Anuradhapura, Vadda Gamini launched a war against him and recaptured Anuradhapura, and continued to rule till the year 17 BC. For many years after him, Sinhalese kings ruled Anuradhapura. During a period of 220 years from 3rd century BC to 1st century BC, 19 kings had ruled Eelam. Among them, there had been 8 Tamil kings who had ruled from Anuradhapura for a total of 81 years.

Was the War between Ellalan and Thuta Gamini a Racial Conflict?

Ellalan was a Tamil king who ruled the entire Eelam with Anuradhapura as his capital. Thuta Gamini, the ruler of Ruhunu, who captured Anuradhapura from Ellalan and became king, was a Sinhalese monarch. The impact of this war between the two is being felt even today, not only on the history of the country but also on the entire social fabric of the country.

The Eelam people, belonging to various clans but from the same Dravidian root, got divided along religious and linguistic lines into two distinct races as Sinhalese and Tamils by the arrival of foreigners in the country. Although kings from both sides of the racial divide had been continuously engaged in warfare to have the Anuradhapura kingdom under their rule, it was only from

the time of Thuta Gamini that race and religion became the focal point of such wars.

But this seems to be more of a ruse to capture political power than to actually divide the people on a racial line. Taking Mahavansa as their primary source, all the authors who wrote Ceylon history had portrayed Thuta Gamini as the saviour who redeemed the sovereignty and honour of the Sinhalese race from Tamil domination, thus giving a racial bias to the whole affair and describing it as a racial conflict. Mahavansa describes Thuta Gamini as a hero *par excellence*. Many researchers are of the opinion that this was done intentionally by authors of Mahavansa to obliterate from the memory of people the heroism and heritage of the Tamil people. Kumburagamuwe Vahirahimi, Professor of Pali and Buddhism at the Ceylon University, had said about it as, "By portraying Thuta Gamini as a *leader par excellence*, a great injustice had been done to the Tamil people."²¹

Many facts come to light through research done on the social and political situation during the period of Ellalan and Thuta Gamini. The situation that prevailed in the society during that period of time could not have warranted any ultra-national fanaticism. It was an era that predates communalism. It was a period when leaders of clans could rise to the rank of kings. People who had the capacity to lead were recognized as chieftains, and persons who led such chieftains were considered as great heroes. Praising such heroes was not only a part of the culture of their society but was also considered one of the most important duties of the people.

²¹ Prof. Kumburagamuwe Vahirahimi, The War between Ellalan and Gamini, Thinakaran, 26.5.96

In ancient Ceylon, every leader who became king seemed to have been suffering from an insatiable desire to extend their domain by subjugating neighbouring rulers. The resultant wars seemed to have been fought purely for leadership and not on racial lines. There had been incessant warfare among the Tamil rulers themselves for domination, and it had been the same case with the Sinhalese rulers as well. Assassinating even the closest of relatives to usurp the throne was also not uncommon among these two races.

Bringing the entire country under his control seems to have been the aim of every ruler. Ellalan and Thuta Gamini were no exceptions. The war waged by Thuta Gamini against Ellalan was also to capture Anuradhapura and bring the entire country under his rule. A perusal of Eelam history shows that there had been Tamil soldiers serving in Thuta Gamini's army, and also Sinhalese soldiers serving in Ellalan's army.

The building of a monumental hall, known as "The Hall of Thousand Pillars," by Thuta Gamini at the site of Ellalan's death, and making a royal proclamation that strict silence should be observed by everyone when passing that monument as a mark of respect to that illustrious king, show that the war between them was not a racial conflict but only a fight for political power and leadership.

With the passage of time, rulers and communal-minded politicians made political capital by providing a racial twist to the Ellalan-Thuta Gamini war. They used it to inflame communal feelings. This was done to make the people forget the early history of both the Tamils and the Sinhalese, and also to subject the Tamil people to atrocities from time to time.

Ancient Historical Names

Names in use at Present

Manipallavam	Nainativu
Mahavillachi	Medawachchi
Jambukolam, Samputhurai	Kankesanthurai
Kathiramalai	Kantharodai
Manthai, Mahatheertham	Mathoddam
Manipuram	Yalpanam (Jaffna)
Nagulamalai, Thiruthampamalai	Keerimalai
Navalantheevu, Jambutheevu	Valikamam
Kathampanathi	Aruviyaru
Kokarnam	Thirukonamalai (Trincomalee)
Kuthiraimalai	Puttalam
Kurunthai	Mullaitivu
Pallavangam	Padaviya
Kalaa	Urkavatturai (Kayts)
Kasaththurai	Kankesanthurai
Pulanthinagaram, Jananathapuram	Polonnaruwa

Eelam Kingdom and the North Ceylon Kingdom

(From 1st Century to the 5th Century AD)

Classics and archaeology has now cleared many hitherto unknown details about the history of Eelam and of the Tamils. Tamil domination seems to have declined from the 1st Century to the 5th Century AD. During this period, North Ceylon was known as **Utharathesam** and the southern part of the country was called **Thakinathesam**. Intervention from South Indian kings to settle civil wars had also taken place during this period of time.

North Ceylon had been a well-developed area populated by Dravidian people. Only a thirty-mile stretch of sea separates India and North Ceylon. Because of the close proximity to India, trade and commerce flourished in this part of the country, and the people had contacts with other foreign countries as well.

Trade with India had taken place through the northern ports of **Mathoddam** and **Sampukovalam**. It was at this port of Sampukovalam Emperor Asoka's daughter, Sangamithai, landed with the branch of the Bo tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment. This port was also known by the name, Samputhurai. Mathoddam was a very much larger port than Sampukovalam and was considered the main port of the country. Trading ships from China and other East Asian countries sailed across the Bay of Bengal and through the Elephant Pass and used it as their port of call. In those days, Elephant Pass was broad and deep enough to allow passage of large foreign going sailing vessels.

The North Ceylon kingdom of Utharathesam was ruled by King Vasapan during the 1st century AD. According to the inscriptions found on an ancient gold plate discovered at Vallipuram (வல்லிபுரப்பொற்சாசனம்) that district had been administered on behalf of the king by his minister, **Isakiriyan**. This gold plate is estimated to have belonged to the 1st or 2nd century AD. It is also learned from this plate that the Jaffna region was known as Nagatheevu at that period of time.

During the 1st century AD, Ceylon had been ruled by **Eelzanagan**, **Santhamugasiva**, **Yasalanakka Theesan**, **Suban**, and **Vasapan**. Suban started life as a palace guard and succeeded in becoming the king himself. His daughter got married to Vasapan's son, Vankanikka Theesan. During his reign, the Chola King Karikalan invaded Ceylon and, after defeating the Ceylonese king, took away the sacred Buddha's skull as booty and also a good number of Ceylonese people as captives to his country.

The Ceylon king, **Kajavahu** (113 – 135 AD), who was enraged by Karikalan's high-handed actions, invaded the Chola kingdom, and brought people from that country as captives and settled them in different parts of Ceylon. It was also this Kajavahu, who introduced Kannahi-worship in Ceylon. He built a temple for Kannahi at **Ankanakadavai** in Jaffna. Sinhalese people worship Kannahi as Pathini Deio.

Makallakka Nagan, who ruled Ceylon (135 – 141 AD) was Kajavahu's uncle. During the time of his rule, a Nagar king by the name of Valavannan had been ruling Kathiramalai (Kantharodai) areas. At that time, Kathiramalai kingdom was a vassal of the Anuradhapura kingdom. The Chola king, Killivalavan, who visited

Kathiramalai, married Valavannan's daughter, Peelivalai, and took her back to his country as his queen. Their son, Thondaman Ilanthirayan, later became the ruler of Kanchi, and the area he ruled came to be known as Thondai Mandalam. Place name like Pallavarayankaddu, proper name like Nanni, and name of temple deity like Potharayar, are evidence that Eelam had also been at some period under the rule of Pallava kings of South India.

From 165 to 193 AD, Anuradhapura was ruled by **Makallaka Nagan's son, Kanishta Theesan**. During that time, North Ceylon was also under his rule. Because of it, Buddhist activities had taken place in these regions, as could be seen from some of the relics discovered at Kantharodai and Vallipuram districts. At this time, there also happened to be a surge in the popularity and following for the Buddhist religion in Tamil Nadu. A section of the Tamils living in North Ceylon must have embraced Buddhism during that period. These Tamil Buddhists must have later reverted back to their original religion or relocated to other areas.

Events in South India always had an impact on North Ceylon. This may be another reason for the spread of Buddhism among the Tamils in North Ceylon. The short thirty miles of sea separating these two countries would not have been a great barrier for journeys between these two countries by boat. This close proximity caused events in South India to have greater impact on the northern regions of Ceylon than on other parts of the country.

There is also reason to believe that a considerable Tamil population may have again converted to Buddhism during the reigns of Mahallakka Nagan and Kanishta Theesan. History shows that from time to time, self-

interest, wish to acquire authority and social problems had caused people of North Ceylon to change their religion. The oppressive caste system in the Tamil society was also another reason. This situation may also have been fully exploited by the Anuradhapura rulers. It will be a great error of judgement to conclude that North Ceylon was under the rule of Buddhist kings just because Buddhist relics have been discovered in North Ceylon.

Vokarika Theesan was the Anuradhapura ruler from 215 to 237 AD. His brother, Abhaya Nagan, out of enmity with his brother, had gone to South India, recruited a large army, invaded his brother's kingdom, defeated him, and ruled Ceylon for eight years. After that, a Nagar king by the name of Vijayan had ruled Anuradhapura for one year. A triumvirate of Jaffna kings defeated Vijayan and ruled Anuradhapura taking turns on the throne. **Sanga Theesan** occupied the throne from 248 to 252 AD, **Sangabodhi** was king from 252 to 254 AD, and **Gothabayan** had ruled from 254 to 267 AD.

In the year 436 AD, during the time the Tamil king Pandu was ruling from Anuradhapura, **Kulakkodan**, an Indian king, had come to Ceylon. This Indian king had renovated and enlarged the Konesar temple in Trincomalee, donated vast extents of land for the upkeep of that temple, and also built the **Kantalai tank** to irrigate the paddy lands of Thampalakamam.

Kulakodan is said to have brought Vanniyars from South India and appointed them to manage Konesar temple. But this is disputed by many. There are people who believe that Vanniyars were former soldiers of the Chola and Pandiyan armies that invaded the country at later dates, who settled down in the country and then forcibly took over

the management of this temple. These people settled down in the area extending from Elephant Pass in the north to Katuththampalai in the south and from Mannar in the west to Trincomalee in the east. It is for that reason, this area is even now being called Vanni.

During the time Seelamegavannan ruled Anuradhapura (614 – 623 AD), Srinagan was ruling Kathiramalai. He befriended the Pallava king Singavishnu, and with his help defeated Seelamegavannan and captured the Anuradhapura kingdom. The internal rivalry and thirst for power that prevailed in the country enabled South Indian rulers to intrude into the local affairs of the country. It had been almost a normal practice for many a local king to seek and receive help from South Indian Tamil kings and their armies during their conflicts with each other.

Because of this situation, Tamils had occupied important positions as ministers and other dignitaries in the Ceylon political arena. This practice continued up to the time of King Kasiyappan II (661 – 664 AD). Thappulan, who inherited the throne on the death of Kasiyappan's death, started the purging of Tamil bureaucrats. This caused another South Indian intervention. Athadathan, son-in-law of Thissan, went to India, recruited an army, and declared war on Thappulan. After defeating Thappulan, he ascended the throne assuming the royal name of Dathoba Thissan II. He then removed Pothakuddan, the Tamil administrator of Polonnaruwa, and replaced him with two Sinhalese officials.

With the defeat of his father, Kasiyappan's son, Manavarman, fled to Jaffna and lived there in exile for some time. He then went to India, and whilst serving as an official in the court of Pallava King Narasimman I, earned the admiration and respect of the king for his heroic performance in the war at Vathavi. In return for his services, the Pallava king provided him with an army and sent him to Ceylon to redeem his kingdom from Dathoba Thissan. With the help of the Indian army, Manavarman was able to defeat not only Dathoba Thissan but also Pothakuddan, thus bringing the North Ceylon kingdom also under his control.

The Antiquity of the North Ceylon Kingdom

North Ceylon kingdom or, what was called, Utharathesam was a vast region, and was originally known as Nagatheevu or Nagatheevam. With the passage of time, the names **Nagatheevu** and **Nagatheevam** came to refer only to the Jaffna peninsula, and the rest of the area came to be referred to as North Ceylon and Utharathesam. The original area extended from Mannar to Trincomalee and included Valikamam, Thenmarachchi, Vadamarachchi, Pachilaipalli, Vanni district, Manthai, Puttalam, Mullaitivu, and Padaviya.

In ancient times, these areas were all Tamil settlements. From stone inscriptions discovered at **Kottegama**, it has come to light that during certain periods of time in the history of the country, the North Ceylon kingdom had extended up to Gampola and even to Jayawardena Kotte.

The North Ceylon kingdom is mentioned as **Manalur**, **Manatthidal**, and **Manavai** in many ancient manuscripts. An episode is described in an ancient stone inscription discovered at Senthalai recently as follows: "The commander of the army sent by the Pallava king, Singavishnu, to assist Manavarman was **Perumpiduhu Mutharaian Viaran Maran**."

As the North Ceylon Kingdom was a vast area, there had been many principalities in that region. People from South India had migrated to these areas from time to

time. The famous Chinese traveler, Fahien, who visited Ceylon between 400 AD and 414 AD, had stated that an advanced state of trade and commerce based on the barter system had existed in Ceylon at the time of his visit.

North Ceylon kingdom during the reign of Ukkirasingan

Attacks by Sinhalese kings from the south and invasions by the South Indians from the north had their impact on North Ceylon politics. Rulers of North Ceylon were, at times, subordinate to the Anuradhapura kingdom, but during other times, they had been independent and sovereign on their own rights. Although Manavarman, the son of Kasiyappan II, had imposed his authority over North Ceylon with the help of Pallava rulers, it started declining after the 8th century AD.

Taking advantage of that situation, the king of Kalinga, Ukkirasingan, captured the North Ceylon kingdom in 785AD, and ruled the region with the ancient settlement of Kathiramalai as his administrative capital. There are numerous contradictory versions about his pedigree. Some historians had described him as a descendant of Vijayan's family, who invaded Ceylon from North India. There are others who are of the opinion that he came to Ceylon together with Vijayan and was the chieftain of Singapura. As evidence to support this view, they quote the event of him abandoning Kathiramalai and moving his capital to Singapura.

There were many reasons for Ukkirasingan to move his capital to Singapura. During that time, Kathiramalai

had been populated by Tamil Buddhists. One of the reasons can be that, as an ardent Hindu, the Buddhist environment may not have been much to his liking, and so moved his seat of government to Singapura which had a population mainly consisting of the descendants from the original settlers from Kalinga.

At Keerimalai, there is, even today, a fresh water spring that flows into the sea. This spring water has many medicinal and healing properties and was considered sacred in ancient times. During the reign of Ukkirasingan, Maruthapiravalli, an Indian princess, came to North Ceylon on a pilgrimage, with the sole intent of bathing in the sacred waters of Keerimalai. Ukkirasingan, who happened to see Maruthapiravalli, fell in love with her at first sight and married her. Then, at her request, he built the famous Kandasamy temple at Maviddapuram. King Ukkirasingan specifically got down the statue of Lord Kandasamy, that was consecrated in the *sanctum sanctorum* of that temple, from India for that purpose. Kayathurai or Kasathurai, the port through which this statue was brought to Ceylon, was renamed Kankesanthurai to commemorate that event, as Kankesan is another name of Lord Kandasamy.

Ukkirasingan had a son by the name of Narasingan and a daughter named Senpakavathy. Narasingan was given the royal name of Jeyathunga Pararajasekeran by his father when he handed over the throne to him. During that time, Senan I was ruling Anuradhapura. Sri Maravallapan (815-862AD), the Pandiya king of that time invaded Ceylon, defeated Jeyathunga Pararajasekeran, and also received tribute from Senan before returning to India.

From the 9th century to the 13th century AD, Jeyathunga Pararajasekeran's descendants had been ruling

Singapura. There is a possibility that they had ruled as vassals of the Anuradhapura kings or the Chola and Pandiya kings of India. In the 9th century, North Ceylon kingdom had been ruled by King Kasaba, and in the 10th century, by Mahintha, a Sinhalese king.

King Jeyathunga Pararajasingan presented the sandy regions of Karaiyoor and Pasaiyoor to the Panar caste musician, Yalpadi, as reward for his brilliant performance on his instrument at the Royal Court. Yalpadi and his clan developed and settled down in that region. It was for that reason, this area came to be called Yalpanam.

Singai Nagar, and the reason for that name

Further research is needed to determine which was the Singai Nagar established by Ukkiraseenan. Segarajasekaramalai, Segarajasekaram, and Thashinakailasamalai describe Singai Nagar as the capital of the North Ceylon kingdom. In stone inscriptions found at Kottegama, there is a reference to Singapura Ariya Emperor.

Researchers engaged in tracing the origin of this name had provided many different versions and opinions. Some of them are of the opinion that as Ukkirasingan was from Kalinga, he had named his new capital after one of the towns in Kalinga bearing the same name. The capital of King Paranthakan, who was the ruler of the Chola kingdom in India, was called Singapura. His reign extended over the whole of Ceylon at one time, which included the North Ceylon kingdom as well. Some researchers are of the

opinion that he might have given the same name to his administrative capital in Ceylon too. The other reason given, which seems to be more feasible, is that Ukkirasingan would have named his capital after him by giving the "sing(a)n" part of his name to it.

There are differences of opinion among researchers as to the exact location of Singai Nagar. Some of them are of the opinion that Nallur and Singai Nagar are one and the same. There are others who say that Singai Nagar was the Vallipuram region. From historical sources, it becomes clear that Nallur and Singai Nagar are two different kingdoms. A Tamil inscription 'nghq;nfhy ePu;r:rpq;if ahupad;' has been found inscribed on a stone discovered at Kottegama in the Kegalle district. Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam and Rev. Fr. Gnanapragasam are of the opinion that the area described in that inscription was the region surrounding Vallipuram temple.

According to that inscription, the present Jaffna lagoon had been a deep sea during that period. The east-west movement of the tides in Indian Ocean had created that deepness. Not knowing the availability of abundant underground fresh water in the Jaffna peninsula, our forefathers had established settlements in the Vanni district depending entirely on the surface water sources of the rivers flowing through that region. Punakari, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar are such settlements. Except for the Jaffna peninsula, which did not have any source of surface fresh water, Tamil people established settlements in the rest of the vast northern region.

Researchers like Dr. S. Kunarasa and A. Pushparathnam have stated that recent research and archaeological evidence confirm that Ukkirasingan's new capital of Singai Nagar was none other than the fertile area of Punakari. According to them, Singai Nagar was situated outside the Jaffna peninsula, in the Vanni district, and most probably at Punakari. Ancient ruins found there, and archaeological findings, support this theory that Punakari must have been a fertile kingdom.

The Chola Reign

The impact of political events in South Indian kingdoms also caused noticeable changes in Ceylon as well for various reasons. The areas affected were not only political but also social and religious as well.

The Chola Empire originated in the latter part of the 9th century. During the time Thappulan the Fifth (917-929 AD) was ruling Ceylon, the Pandiya king, who was defeated by the Chola king, took refuge in Ceylon with assistance from the Ceylon king. When the Ceylon king was making preparations to help the refugee Pandiyan king to retake his lost kingdom, an insurgency broke out in the country, and the Pandiyan king had to leave the country and return to Mathurai, leaving behind his crown and his royal robe.

During the reign of Uthayan III, Chola king Paranthakan declared war on Ceylon in an effort to appropriate the crown and the robe left behind by the Pandiyan king. He did not succeed in finding those royal properties. But he killed the king of Singai Nagar in battle and, after that, defeated the Anuradhapura king as well. Then he established a city on the banks of Padavikulam, appointed Sri Uthama Cholan as Regent, and returned to his own country. To commemorate his victory, the title 'மதுரையும் ஈழமுங் கொண்டவன்' (The conqueror of Mathurai and Eelam) was conferred on him.

In 995AD, Chola king, Rajarajan, invaded Ceylon, forced Mahinthan, the ruler of Polonnaruwa, into exile and captured the royal belongings that were left behind by the Pandiyan king. After him, in the year 1014 AD, Rajendra

Thevan the First, captured the whole of Ceylon and made it a province of his Chola kingdom. He named this new province, 'மும்முடிச் சோழமண்டலம்' (The Triple Kingdom of the Chola Empire). He also made Polonnaruwa the administrative capital for the region and named it Jananathapuram or Jananathamangalam, and appointed a regent to administer the province on his behalf before returning to Chola Nadu.

In this process, the Tamil region of North Ceylon also became part of the Chola Empire, and continued to be so till 1070AD. In all, Chola kings had ruled Ceylon for a total of 126 years, and the period of their reign was considered as the golden age of the Eelam Tamils. Tamil language and Hindu religion received tremendous boost during this period. When the North Ceylon kingdom went under the Cholas, the Sinhalese kings also became vassals to the Chola kings. During their period of domination over Ceylon, Chola kings built temples for Lord Shiva at Polonnaruwa, Mathoddam and Padaviya. The most notable among these Sivan temples was the one built by Rajarajan, also known as Vanavanmathevi Easwaram, dedicated to Lord Shiva's consort, Thevi. During the time of Cholas, Mathoddam was known as Rajarajapuram, and the Sivan temple at Thiruketheswaram was renamed Rajarajeswaram. When Polonnaruwa rose in prestige as the capital during Chola rule, Anuradhapura started losing its prominence in the political scene.

During the reign of Chola kings, political administration in the country was modified along the Chola system of government, and a great cultural reawakening also took place in the country. Representatives to look after the day-to-day administration were elected on a system known as "Kudaolai," in which the names of

candidates were written on chits and placed inside a pot, from which the winners were drawn in the presence of the members of the public. This method was also used to elect members for agricultural boards and village councils. Village councils were formed with powers to collect taxes, administer justice, and regulate irrigation for agriculture.

Even though there had been occasions of insurgency and civil unrest in the country from time to time during their reign, Chola rulers had been taking great interest in the welfare of the people by developing agriculture. Stone inscriptions carved in the 11th century during the Chola period had been discovered recently in the Jaffna peninsula. One such stone inscription had been unearthed inside the Jaffna Fort and two more inside the Fort at Kayts.

According to those inscriptions, representatives of the Chola Empire had been ruling North Ceylon. In the year 948AD, the Chola representative at Singai Nagar had been Puvanekavahu, who was also known as Puvanekavasagar. There is reason to believe that this person would have been appointed by the Chola king, Paranthakan, as his representative. A Grantham language record made in his journal by the Persian historian Asethy serves as evidence in support for this assumption. According to this journal, the Persian king, Dobak, had sent an expeditionary force under the command of Karshap, which landed at the port of Kala (Kayts), and after a two-day campaign defeated King Vahu. Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam had quoted this journal entry in his book, "The History of Jaffna." As North Ceylon was under Chola rule during the period mentioned in that journal, and also because the name Vahu seems to be a Tamil name, there is reason to believe that Puvanekavasagar or

Puvanekavahu would have been that ruler of Singai Nagar at that time as the representative of the Chola kingdom.

The ruler of Singai Nagar, the Sinhalese kings, and other sub-rulers, who suffered from foreign domination, rose up against Chola rule from time to time. During such times of turmoil, armies from the Chola kingdom in South India arrived and suppressed those uprisings. After Paranthaka Cholan's reign, Kantharathithiya Thevar, Uthamachola Thevar, Paranthakan II, Rajarajan I, Rajendran I, Rajathirajan I, Rajendra Thevan II, and Veera Rajendran had ruled over the Chola empire.

During the time of the last king, Veera Rajendran, Athi Rajendran had ruled Polonnaruwa as the representative of the Chola Empire. On the death of Veera Rajendran, there was a war between Kulothungan and Athi Rajendran for the vacant throne, in which Kulothungan came out victorious and took over the kingdom assuming the royal name of Kulothunga Cholan I.

After ascending the throne, due to the unsettled atmosphere and the chaotic situation that prevailed in the kingdom, Kulothungan could not devote enough attention to Ceylon. Taking advantage of this situation, Vijayabahu, from South Ceylon, at first, brought Polonnaruwa under his control in 1070AD. Then, he managed to chase out the Cholas from Ceylon and became the ruler of the entire country, including the North Ceylon kingdom. His reign lasted till 1110AD.

After strengthening his rule in the home turf of Chola Nadu, Kulothungan invaded Ceylon. His army under the command of **Karunakara Thondaman** was able to take control of Ceylon and Kalingam. This war took

place in 1110AD after the death of Vijayabahu. During his campaign in North Ceylon, the Chola army commander noticed the salt found in abundance at **Karanavai** and **Vellaiparavai** going waste and devised a scheme to export it to his home country of Chola Nadu. In order to facilitate the transportation of salt to India, he dug out a lagoon with access to the open sea, which came to be known as **Thondamanaru (Thondaman's river)**. The **Karunakara Pillaiyar temple** at Urumpirai was also built by him.

Manaparanan was the son of Vijayabahu's sister. He married Vijayabahu's daughter, Ratnavalli, and their son was Parakramabahu I, who ruled Ceylon from 1153 to 1286 AD. Before becoming the ruler of the entire country, he was the sub-ruler of Panankamam. During that period, he enlarged the Giant Tank and the Padaviya Tank, and also renamed Padaviya Tank as Parakramasamudram (Ocean of Parakrama). At the same time, he enlarged his army and not only annexed the Vanni areas to his kingdom but also brought the Polonnaruwa kingdom, which was at that time ruled by his cousin, Kayavahu II, under his control. From that time onwards, Singai Nagar served as the political capital of the North Ceylon kingdom

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The Jaffna Kingdom

The Original Form of the Jaffna Region

The Jaffna Peninsula, which is the northernmost part of Ceylon, took many millions of years to attain the present geographical form. In very ancient times, it was connected to and was part and parcel of the Indian subcontinent. At one point of time, this area drifted off from the mainland and became two big islands as a result of continental drifts, shifting of ocean beds and other natural phenomena that took place. These were then known as Peruntheevu and Sirutheevu (Large Island and Small Island). The larger island was also known as **Manipuram**, **Manipallavam**, **Nagatheevam**, and **Maninagatheevam**, whilst the small island was called **Mullaitheevu** and **Erumaimullaitheevu**.²²

With the recurrence of natural disasters from time to time, the larger island got splintered into many tiny islands. The tiny islands thus formed are the present day Karaitheevu, Mandaitheevu, Pungudutheevu, Analatheevu, Nainatheevu, Neduntheevu, Eluvaitheevu and Valikamam. The smaller island was made up of Thenmarachchi, Vadamarachchi, and Pachilaipalli. The seas of Pannai, Punakari and Elephant Pass were together known as "Kalappukkadai." At that time, it was not a lagoon but a sea that was wider and deeper than at present, with opening to the Bay of Bengal.

In course of time, waves and tides from the Bay of Bengal caused large quantities of sand from the seabed to shift towards Kalappukadal closing its eastern entrance completely, and that island became a peninsula of the mainland. This land area rests on a bed of limestone, and this porous lime stone bed serves as a reservoir for the fresh water from the eons of rainfall. This fresh water reserve lies very close to the surface of the land and also overflows in some places in the form of fresh water springs. The most famous of these is the historically well-known spring at Keerimalai.

Research papers published by "International Society for the Investigations of Ancient Civilizations," describes the erosion of the shorelines of Ceylon that began 55 million years ago. It says, "The anomalies in the Arabian Sea, south of Iran, run east and west but are about 2500 kilometers north of the similarly numbered anomalies south of Ceylon. Hence, there must at one time have been a huge transform fault joining the ridge in the Arabian Sea to the one south of Ceylon. Some 55 million years ago, relative motion south of Ceylon slowed from 16 centimeters per year to about six centimeters and probably stopped altogether in the Arabian Sea. Then, about 35 million years ago movement resumed in the Arabian Sea, but its direction was no longer parallel to the ancient transform fault. New sea floor was again generated, and the boundary changed from the ridge oblique to the spreading direction to a series of ridges, segments that were perpendicular to the direction of motion and are joined by transform faults." Only 30 miles of sea separates the present Jaffna Peninsula from the Indian subcontinent now. But, researchers are convinced that the Jaffna landmass covered a vast area in prehistoric times but got reduced to its present size by sea erosion.

The Origin of the name "Yalpanam."

Many different opinions exist of how the northern area of Eelam got the name Yalpanam. There are many classics based on the story of an exponent of the musical instrument, Yarl. There are also many literary works based on this story. But ancient stone inscriptions, evidences from history and archaeology point otherwise.

Kailayamalai, Vaiyapadal and Yalpana Vaipavamalai are some of the classics that describe the land areas of Yalpanam. Many books had been written based on these classics and archaeological findings. Notable among them are **Yalpana Vaipava Kawmuki, Yalpana Vaipava Vimarsanam, Yalpana Sarithiram** (History of Jaffna), **Yalpana Rachiyathin Thottam** (Description of Jaffna kingdom), **Yalpana Rachiyam** (Jaffna Kingdom), and **Punakari Tholliyal Aivukal** (Archaeological Research of Punakari).

Vaiyapuri, the court poet of the Jaffna king of that time, Segarajasekeran, wrote a book called "Vaiyapadal" in the 13th century AD. According to his book, Vipeeshanan, who became king of Ceylon after the death of Ravana in the Rama-Ravana war, had donated the sandy areas of the northern coast to a musician who performed a Yarl recital in his royal court. It also describes how this musician developed this sandy area into a fertile region. The author of this book is of the opinion that this northern sandy region would have acquired the name, Yalpanam, in the year 101 BC.

But, according to "Kailayamalai," this area is supposed to have got the name, Yalpanam, as it had been

donated to a Yarl musician by Valasingan (Jeyathinga Pararajan), the son of Ukkirasingan, who ruled Singai Nagar during the 8th century AD. This book was written in the 17th century AD. The book, "Yalpana Vaipavamalai" says that Valasingan (Jeyathinga Pararajan), the son of Ukkirasingan and Maruthapiravalli, donated this area to his court poet, Veeraragavan, in appreciation of his talent as a Yarl musician. Although these three books differed greatly on the timing of the event, they all agree on one point: that a Yarl musician received this area of Yalpanam as a prize.

Quite a different theory was put forward by S. Kumaraswamy, who did research on the place names of the Northern Province. According to him, the Ceylon Tamil king Ravanam was a great exponent of the musical instrument "Veena" (Yarl), and had it as the emblem on his flag for that reason. Because of his interest in this musical instrument, Ceylon became famous for this instrumental music and produced a vast number of experts in this field. During the reign of Rajaraja Pandiyan in Mathurai, exponents and expert yarl instrumentalists from Eelamandalam had been going to Mathurai to compete with Rajarajan's court musicians like Veerapathiran and Pathini. Kumaraswamy is of the opinion that it was for this reason, this area, which produced such extraordinarily talented yarl instrumentalists, got its name.

There is yet another theory put forward by Mudaliyar A. M. Gunasekera, a Sinhalese researcher. According to him, the Sinhalese translation of Nallur is Yapana, and the name Yalpanam derived from that term. This theory faces some difficulties. There is yet another Nallur at Panadura in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, which had been translated into Sinhalese as Nalluruwa, and

not as Yapana. As this place is not called Yapana, it becomes clear that Yalpanam is an original Tamil name, and not derived from any Sinhalese name. There are also numerous other Tamil names for places all over the country, given to them during the reign of Tamil kings, that are still being used today.

Dr. S. Paranavithana, the famous Sinhalese archaeologist, in his book "The Ariya Kingdom in North Ceylon," says that the northern part of Ceylon was once under the rule of Chandrabanu, a native of Java, and was known in Sinhalese as Yapapatuna. And the present name of Yalpanam derived from that Sinhalese name, Yapapatuna. Dr. K. S. Nadarajah, who did extensive research on the history of Jaffna, categorically rejected these two hypotheses. He says, "patuna" is a Tamil word, meaning "pattanam," or town, and points out that the word, patuna, had been used in the ancient classic, Pattinapalai, one of the "Pathu Pattu" (Ten Verses) written during the period of the Sangams. This was during the pre-Christian era. He adds, that the Tamil alphabet 'o;' (Iz) is exclusive to the Tamil language, and is found only in the Tamil language and other languages that derived from it.²³

According to Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, the ruler of Singai Nagar, Jeyathinga Pararajasingan, the son of Ukkirasingan, donated the small area of land, presently known as Karaiyoor or Pasaiyoor, as a reward to a Yalpadi (Yarl-playing singer) by the name of Panan. And this area came to be called Yalpanam as the yalpadi, Panan, and his clan developed and established their settlements in that place.²⁴

²³ Dr. K. S. Nadarajah,

(Leisurely Research)

²⁴ Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, The History of Jaffna

Although there are differences and discrepancies in the time frame mentioned by these authors, almost all of them agree that the area got the name, Yalpanam, because it was donated to the yarl-player, Panan. Before the advent of language-based proper names, caste or clan names had been used in many parts of the world. Panan may have thus belonged to the caste by the same name. During the period of the Nagar rulers, which was before the birth of Christ, there had been proper names like Oviyar, Kuravar, and Kammiyar. These are all occupation-based caste names. Along these lines, the caste of people, whose main occupation was playing the Yarl, was called Panar. Panars were among the earliest castes among the Tamil people, whose occupation was playing musical instruments like kulal, yarl, and mulzavu. The clan or subdivision of this caste that specialized in yarl was called Yalpanar. That Yalpanam got its name because people of the Yalpanar caste mainly populated it seems to be the most acceptable hypothesis.

The name, Yalpanar, is found in many of the ancient Tamil classics. Both, Thirunelakandar, in Periyapuram, and Thirupanalzvar, in Naalaayira Thivya Pirapantham belonged to the yalpanar caste. A female descendant of Thiruneelakanda Yalpanar formulated the sequence of Hindu religious rituals in its present form. Ceylon was known as Nagatheepam and Nagatheevu as it was inhabited by the Nagar race. Even though proper names with roots from this race, like Nagamma, Nagarajah, Nageswari, Nageswaran, are still being used, the earlier phase of caste-based naming of people had disappeared from the scene due to assimilation with other races and other factors that took place in the course of history. Likewise, although the occupation connected with that caste, and the name, Yalpanam, still exist, the caste of Yalpanar had disappeared from the scene.

Jaffna Kingdom under Ariya Emperors

The period Ariya Emperors ruled Jaffna Kingdom could be considered as a period of great reawakening in Ceylon. It was more so for the Eelam Tamil people. During this period, the Jaffna kingdom has existed, with fame and pride, as an independent Tamil kingdom. From the 8th century AD onwards, Kalinga king, Ukkirasingan, and his descendants had been ruling the North Ceylon kingdom – at times, as vassals to Sinhalese and Chola kings, and at other times as sovereign rulers.

Kairos, a Portuguese historian, had noted that the Kalinga rulers of Jaffna had taken brides from the Brahmin caste of Rameswaram, and because of the intermarriages intermingling with the Brahmins, they came to be known as Ariya Kings. The kings of Singai Nagar had been powerful rulers with strong armies and navies. As these rulers took to wearing the same types of dresses the Brahmins wore following their intermarriages and started following most of their customs, they came to be referred to as the Ariya kings. They also brought Rameswaram under their rule and assumed the dynastic name of “**Sethukavalan**.” These Ariya Kings adopted the figure of a bull as the emblem for their royal standard and “**Sethulanchanai**” as their royal coat of arms and continued to rule one after the other under the royal names of Pararajasekaran and Segarajasekaran.

Rule of these Ariya kings began in the 13th century AD. Since then, up to the time the Portuguese set foot in the country, the Ariya dynasty had been strong and firm.

Kalingamakan

(Segarajasekaran I - 1215 – 1236 AD)

Kalingamakan alias **Kalinga Vijayabahu** had ruled for 21 years from 1215 to 1236 AD with Polonnaruwa as his capital. He was the first to assume the title of Ariyan Emperor. He was also known as Vijayakalinga Emperor. He is referred to as Vijayakoolankai Emperor in the literary classic, **Vaipavamalai**. Scholars are of the view that “**Koolankai**” was another name for Kalingam.

The Sinhalese classic of **Nikayasangirakam** describes this ruler as having built forts at **Polonnaruwa, Pulachcheri, Koddiyaram, Kanthalai, Kanthupulu, Kurunthu, Padaviya, Maddukona, Thamilpattinam, Urathoddai, Komuthu, Meepathoddai, Mandali, and Mannar**. This ruler liberated all the Tamil areas, which were under the domination of Sinhalese rulers and, in fact, chased away all the Sinhalese settlers to the south of the country. For this reason, the Sinhalese classic, **Choolavansa**, had described him as a tyrant.

The Sinhalese rulers thus displaced had to abandon Polonnaruwa, which had been their capital for over 250 years, and made Dambadeniya their capital. This was the beginning of the firm and strong Tamil rule in the country. It is stated in the Mahavansa that Kalingamakan was chased away from Polonnaruwa in 1236 AD by Parakramabahu II, the then ruler of Dambadeniya. Other historians had also written that Kalingamakan had lived in hiding from 1236 to 1242 AD, and the Jaffna kingdom had been administered during this period by Pandimalavan, an officer appointed for that purpose. It is also stated that this

official later brought back Kalingamakan from exile and crowned him ruler with the name, Vijaya Kalinga Chakravarthi.

To safeguard his kingdom from possible attacks by the rulers from South Ceylon, he moved his capital from Singai Nagar to the Jaffna peninsula, which was known as Nagatheepam at that time, and the Jaffna kingdom started prospering again. From the time Kalinga Vijayabahu brought the entire country under his rule, Tamil kings assumed the name of “**Ariya Emperors**”.

Kulasekara Singaiyarian

(Pararajasekaran I - 1240 – 1256 AD)

On the death of Vijaya Kalingan in 1240 AD, his son, **Kulasekara Singaiyarian**, succeeded him to the throne, and assumed the royal name of **Pararajasekaran I**.

After the death of this Ariyan king, Chandrabanu from Java invaded Ceylon in 1247 AD, but failed in his attempt to capture the island. He then formed an alliance with the South Indian King, Jadavarman Sunthara Pandiyan, and both of them jointly invaded Ceylon and succeeded in defeating Parakramabahu. After defeating Parakramabahu, Sunthara Pandiyan hoisted his flag with its fish emblem at Trincomalee, and had his fish emblem carved at the entrance to the fort there, which is now known as Fort Frederick.

After the Pandiyas captured Ceylon, Chandrabanu had ruled over the Jaffna kingdom for a short time. After

consolidating his position and strengthening his rule, Chandrabanu stopped paying tribute to the Pandiyan king. As a result the Pandiyas invaded the Jaffna kingdom in 1262 and brought it under their control again. Chandrabanu was killed in that war and Jaffna kingdom again came under the rule of the Ariyan emperors. The places where the people who came with Chandrabanu settled are Chavakanseema, Chavakachcheri and Chavakan Kottai.

After Chandrabanu, Jaffna kingdom had come under the rule of Ariyan emperors. Kulasekaran (Pararajasekaran), who became king, made many changes in the political system. In addition, he not only developed the economy but also contributed immensely to the development of agriculture in a big way.

Kulothunga Singaiariyan

(Segarajasekaran II - 1256 to 1279 AD)

His son, Kulothunga Singaiariyan, who assumed the royal name of Segarajasekaran II, succeeded Kulasekaran to the throne of the Jaffna kingdom. During this period of time, Parakramabahu II, who ruled from Dambadeniya died and was succeeded by his son Vijayabahu. Vijayabahu was later assassinated by his minister Mitta, and Mitta's brother Puvanehavahu became king.

The authority over the pearl fishing in the Gulf of Mannar seemed to have been in the hands of rulers of Singai Nagar. This resulted in a war between Puvanehavahu and Kulothunga Singaiariyan, in which Kulothungan emerged victorious. He not only destroyed

the Yapahuva kingdom but also brought the whole of Ceylon under the rule of Tamil kings.

Marco Polo, a merchant-traveler from Venice, who became famous for his world travels, had made mention in his records about touching a port in Jaffna on his way to China, and that this port was known as Kolam. The port referred to as Kala by Arabian traders and Kaulam by Marco Polo is Urathurai – the present-day Kayts. Marco Polo had mentioned that the whole island of Ceylon was under the reign of a North Ceylon king by the name of Santheman. Santheman may be a corruption of the name Singaiariyan. The year Marco Polo reached this Jaffna port was 1284 AD.

Vikrama Singaiariyan

(Pararajasekaran II - 1279 – 1302 AD)

His son, Vikrama Singaiariyan, who assumed the royal title of Pararajasekaran II, when he ascended the throne, succeeded Kulothunga Singaiariyan. During his reign, the son of Puvanehavahu, who was the king at Yapahuva, approached the South Indian king, Kulasekara Pandiyan, for help; and on the advice given by Kulasekara Pandiyan paid tribute to the King of Jaffna and continued as a vassal king at Yapahuva. Even then, he kept on changing his seat of government to places like Kurunegala, Dambadeniya and Gampola to be as far away from Jaffna as possible. During the time of Vikrama Singaiariyan, there had been a religious riot between the Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu Tamils. Vikrama Singaiariyan managed to put down this riot by arresting and beheading all the people who were involved in the rioting.

Many tiny kingdoms started sprouting in the Vanni areas. The Chola and Pandiya soldiers who came to assist the kings of Ceylon not only settled down in the fertile areas of Ceylon, but also tried to establish their own kingdoms in the areas they settled when the Tamil and Sinhalese became weak. They established their authority over places like Panankamam, Kumarapuram and Omanthai. These Vanniars did great service to the Hindu religion by building Hindu temples in those areas that were under their control.

During the reign of Vikrama Singaiariyan, the Jaffna kingdom was militarily strong and had a flourishing overseas trade. Yovan, a Catholic Priest from Monte Corvino, who passed the seas of Jaffna in 1292, had recorded in his travel journal that he had seen the wreckage of more than 60 seagoing vessels in that area.

Varothaya Singaiariyan

(Segarajasekaran III - 1302 – 1325 AD)

Following the death of Vikramasingan in 1302 AD, his son **Varothaya Singaiariyan** succeeded him with royal title of Segarajasekeran III. He took all possible steps to prevent any repetition of communal riots like the ones that happened during his father's reign. During his reign, Parakrabahu moved his seat of government from Kurunegala to Dambadeniya. The reason for this move was the fear of attacks from Jaffna kings.

During this period of time, dispute arose over succession to the throne between the Sunthara Pandiyan, the son of the queen consort and King Maravarman, and his

concubine's son, Veera Pandiyan. The Muslim ruler of India sent an army in 1310 AD under the command of Malik Kapoor to help Sunthara Pandiyan, and with the help of this army, Sunthara Pandiyan became king. When the Muslim army withdrew, Veera Pandiyan overthrew Sunthara Pandiyan and captured the throne. Sunthara Pandiyan then sought the help of the Jaffna King, Varothaya Singaiariyan. Whilst Varothayan was away in Madurai assisting Sunthara Pandiyan, chieftains in the Vanni areas sought the help of the Sinhalese king to stage a revolt against his rule. But the Sinhalese king did not come forward to assist the Vanni chieftains. Varothaya Singaiariyan was able to quell the rebellion and establish law and order in his kingdom.

Not only did Varothaya Singaiariyan establish law and order in his kingdom, but also contributed immensely to the development of the Tamil language. He established an institute for both local and South Indian intellectuals and poets, and published numerous new books. The rulers who succeeded him continued this tradition of maintaining the institute established by him.

The glory of his reign is described in his journal by Friar Odorick, who landed in a Jaffna port in 1322 AD. He had noted that "the gold, silver, and pearls this king had in his possession cannot be found anywhere else in the world." This shows that the Jaffna kingdom had been very prosperous during the reign of Varothaya Singaiariyan.

Marthanda Singaiariyan

(Pararajasegaran III - 1325 – 1348 AD)

Varothaya Singaiariyan died in 1325 AD, and was succeeded by his son, **Marthanda Singaiariyan**, under the royal name of Pararajasegaran III, and the Jaffna kingdom continued to prosper under his rule.

Ibn Battuta, a Muslim traveler, had noted about the prosperity of the Jaffna kingdom in his journal. He had written that the strength of this Ariyan king's army and the amount of cinnamon, ahil and other merchandize that had been stored for export surprised him. There had been a rebellion by the chieftains of Vanni during his reign.

Kunapooshana Singaiariyan

(Segarajasegaran IV - 1348 – 1371 AD)

On the death of Marthanda Singaiariyan, his son, Kunapooshanan, who took upon him the royal name of Segarajasegaran IV, succeeded him to the throne. As he was only a child when his father died, his mother acted as the regent until he came of age and shouldered the responsibilities of the throne. Juan de Marignolli, an emissary of the Pope of Rome, had noted in his journal about the experiences he had in Jaffna whilst he was on his way to China. In that record, he mentions about the many audiences he had with the queen, the meals he had with her, how the court physicians treated his dysentery, and the many gifts the queen had given to him. The queen referred to by Marignolli is the mother of Kunapooshanan. A map of Ceylon drawn in 1375 AD, known as the Catalan Map,

also makes mention of a North Ceylon kingdom ruled by a queen during this period of time.

After taking over the reins of government, Kunapooshanan took great pains in developing the defense and economy of his kingdom. During his reign, there was not only a marked improvement in industry, agriculture, and education but also it was a period of peace and stability.

Veerothaya Singaiariyan

(Pararajasegaran IV - 1371 – 1380 AD)

Veerothaya Singaiariyan, the son of Kunapooshanan, came to the throne in 1371 AD, and selected Pararajasegaran IV as his royal name. There was unrest in the kingdom during his reign. He appointed one of the Vanni chieftains who stood by him in putting down the rebellion as a vassal king for the Vanni district. But his reign did not last very long as he died prematurely.

Jeyaveera Singaiariyan

(Segarajasegaran V - 1380 – 1410 AD)

On the premature death of Veerothaya Singaiariyan, his son, Jeyaveera Singaiariyan, came to the throne with the royal name of Segarajasegaran V. During the reign of Ariyan kings in Jaffna, rulers of other parts of Ceylon had been paying tribute to the Jaffna kings. In 1386 AD, Alagakonar, the army commander of Wickramabahu III, the then ruler of Gampola district, after strengthening

Jayawardenapura Kotte by deepening the moats and building high fortifications around the fort, not only refused to pay tribute to the Jaffna king but also put to death by hanging the people who went to collect tribute on behalf of the Jaffna king.

The enraged Jeyaveera Singaiariyan invited an Indian army for help and together with his own army formed two brigades. One of his brigades went by sea and the other took the land route and launched a synchronized attack on both Kotte and Gampola simultaneously. Even though he incurred heavy losses, he achieved victory in the end. This fact was found on a stone inscription found recently at Kottegama. H. C. P. Bell, who examined the shaping of the alphabets used in this stone inscription, had declared that the inscriptions must have been made in the fifteenth century.

The reign of Segarajasekeran V is praised as the Golden Age of the Jaffna kingdom. This period in history is noted for its impartial government, strength of the armed forces, and the development of the Tamil literature. This king was responsible for the publication of numerous books in the Tamil language by eminent authorities on various subjects - the most notable ones being **Segarajasegaram**, a medical book, **Segarajasekaramalai**, a book on astrology, and **Kanakathikaram** by Karivaiya, a book on mathematics.

In the year 1365, a Nayakkan by the name of Kampanna Udayar, who was a minister of Vijayanagar Chakravarti, defeated the Muslim king of Mathurai and became king. Tamil officials who were removed by him from positions of power, left Pandiya, Chola, and Pallava countries and migrated to Ceylon, and sought refuge under

the Sinhalese king of Kotte. With passage of time, they became the Sinhalese Vellala caste.²⁵ A section of these immigrants took refuge under the Tamil king and settled down in Tamil areas as well. Both the Sinhalese king and the Tamil king seemed to have welcomed these refugees and provided them with all assistance.

Kunaveera Singaiariyan

(Pararajasekeran V - 1410 - 1440 AD)

On the death of Jeyaveera Singaiariyan in 1410 AD, his brother **Kunaveera Singaiariyan** assumed the royal name of Pararajasegaran V, and ascended the throne. The *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the Hindu temple at Rameswaram was built by this king, for which he sent granite stones that were quarried at Trincomalee. He did great service to the development of the Tamil literature as well. The medical book, **Pararajasegaram**, was written during his period.

Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan

(Segarajasegaran VI - 1440 - 1478 AD)

Kunaveera Singaiariyan died in 1440 AD, and he was succeeded by his son, **Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan** under the royal name of Segarajasegaran VI. It was during the reign of this king, the Ariyan dynasty that had hitherto protected and preserved the Jaffna kingdom came to an end and was lost to the Sinhalese kings of South Ceylon.

During the reign of this king, Parakramabahu VI ruled the Kotte kingdom. A great warrior by the name of Panikkan came to Ceylon from Malayalam during this period. Parakramabahu took Panikkan under his wings, and got him

²⁵ Mudaliyar S. Rasanayagam, *History of Jaffna*

married to a lady from his clan. Senpahaperumal (Sapumal Kumaraya) and Jeyaveeran (Ambulagala Kumaraya) were the sons of Panikkan. The name of the son of Parakramabahu's daughter, Ulahudaithevi, was also Jeyaveeran. Although Parakramabahu had adopted Panikkan's sons as his own, he had an inner fear that his grandson might lose his opportunity to succeed him to the throne.

Having this in mind, he sent Senpahaperumal to quell the uprising of the Vanniars, and his brother Jeyaveeran to bring the Kandyan king under control. Following his success in suppressing the Vanni rebellion, Parakramabahu praised Senpahaperumal and ordered him to continue his offensive against the Jaffna king as well.

During the time of Parakramabahu, Jaffna came to be called Yapapattuna. Parakramabahu, who could not bear to see the Jaffna kingdom becoming stronger and more developed than the Gampola, Raigama, and Kotte kingdoms, waited for an opportunity to put it down.

The opportunity came when the Jaffna kingdom was weakened by a rebellion that took place in the Vijayanagar kingdom in India. It was at this time, Senpahaperumal was ordered by Parakramabahu to launch the offensive against the Jaffna kingdom. Vanniars did not oppose Senpahaperumal's army when it passed through their territory on its way to attack Jaffna. The first encounter between Senpahaperumal's army and the army of the Jaffna king took place at Chavakachcheri (Chavahan Kottai), and the war ended with a victory for Senpahaperumal. Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan was forced to flee to India and live in exile at Thirukoviloor. During the short period of time between 1450 and 1467 AD, when Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan was in exile in India, the Jaffna kingdom had been under the domination of the Kotte King. In 1457, Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan mounted a counteroffensive and succeeded in taking back his kingdom.

The Rulers of Jaffna after the Ariya Kings

Senpahaperumal

(Sri Sangabodhi Puvanehabahu - 1450 – 1467 AD)

Following his victory over the Jaffna king in 1450, Senpahaperumal built the city of Nallur, assumed the Sinhalese name of Sri Sangabodhi Puvanehabahu, and ruled the Jaffna kingdom for seventeen years. He is the one who built the Nallur Kandasamy Temple. He is praised even today for this noble deed.

In 1467 AD, Parakramabahu VI, the king of Kotte, crowned his grandson as his successor and died a short time after that. On hearing this, Senpahaperumal left Jaffna, went to Kotte, killed Jeyaveeran, and became the king of Kotte with the name of Puvanehabahu VI. In the mean time, he had appointed Vijayabahu as the king of Jaffna. When Vijayabahu was ruling Jaffna, Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan came back from India with his family, killed him and recaptured his kingdom. He continued to have Nallur as his capital, and continued his rule with pomp and glory.

Singai Pararajasegaran

(1478 – 1519 AD)

His eldest son, Pararajasegaran, who came to be known as Singai Pararajasegaran, succeeded

Kanagasooriya Singaiariyan to the throne of the Jaffna kingdom in 1478. He was not only a person of high morals, but also did great service to Tamil language and literature as well as the Hindu religion. Many Hindu temples were built during his reign.

Saddanathar Temple to the north of Jaffna City, Veyilukantha Pillayar Temple in the east, Kailayanathar Temple to the south, and Veeramakali Amman Temple in the west were all built by this king. He also built a tank near Nallur Kandasamy Temple, brought down holy water from the Yamuna River in South India and mixed it with the water in that tank, and named it Yamunai Eri (Yamuneri). He re-established the Tamil Sangam, which was dismantled by Senpahaperumal. Rahuamsam was translated from Sanskrit to Tamil by his cousin, Arasakesari, a poet well versed in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit, and was ceremoniously released during the reign of this king.

Singai Parajasegaran had four sons - **Singabahu**, **Pandaram**, **Paranirupasingan**, and **Sangili**. Sangili murdered Singabahu and Pandaram and took over the kingdom. Pararajasegaran spent the last days of his life filled with sorrow and sadness by the fratricides committed by Sangili.

Sangili Segarajasegaran

(1519 – 1564 AD)

Sangili became the king of Jaffna in 1519 AD with the royal name of Segarajasegaran. For fear of Sangili, his brother, Paranirupasingan, started leading a life of low

profile. Sangili had many Vanniars and Maravars as chiefs in his army. The area where Maravars lived, which was known as Maradchchi at that time, covers the present-day **Thenmarachchi** and **Vadamarachchi**.

The period of Sangili's reign is considered an important era in the history of the Jaffna kingdom. The Portuguese, who landed in Ceylon in 1505 AD, were able to establish contact with Jaffna only in 1543 AD. Sangilian not only opposed having any contacts with the Portuguese, but also meted out severe punishment to all those who had contacts with them.

Portuguese domination over South Ceylon was widespread, and they had been waiting for an opportunity to extend their domination over the Jaffna kingdom as well. As the first step, the Catholic Priest Francis Xavier went to Mannar in 1542 AD and managed to convert about six hundred residents of that area to the Catholic religion. This enraged Sangilian, who went to Mannar with a large army and beheaded that priest and all those who embraced Christianity. Historians are of the opinion that the cause for this "Mannar massacre" was entirely political in nature. At the same time, Sangilian banished from his kingdom all the Sinhalese residents of Jaffna who were creating unrest in the Tamil areas. Those Sinhalese people went and settled down in the Vanni areas and the Kandyan kingdom.

The powers of the Kotte kings were substantially weakened with the arrival of the Portuguese. In 1534 AD, Mayadunne – the younger son of Vijayabahu VII, the king of Kotte – approached Sangilian to help him become king. But his brother, Puvanehabahu VII, became king of Kotte with the help of Sangilian. Mayadunne had to contend with becoming king only for the Seethavaka region.

Puvanehabahu VII, in order to maintain friendly relations with the Portuguese, helped them to spread Christianity in the country. The Portuguese army under the command of Aponso de Sousa mounted an invasion of Jaffna by sea in 1543 AD. But, his ships, blown off course by stormy weather and rough seas, went and landed at Delft. Paraniropasingan, who was naturally angry with his brother, Sangilian, went and befriended the Portuguese.

He approached the Portuguese with the promise to provide all the help they needed to expand their trade and spread their religion if they could only remove Sangilian from the throne and make him king. To win them over to his side, he gave them a great amount of wealth as well. The Portuguese, who promised to comply with his request, went back without doing anything for Paraniropasingan after receiving a bigger bribe from Sangilian. Fearing reprisal from Sangilian, Paraniropasingan fled to Goa in South India, where he lived and died in exile with his ambition of becoming king unfulfilled.

The “**Mannar massacre**” enraged the Portuguese and increased their determination to remove Sangilian from the Jaffna throne and establish their domination in that kingdom. A Portuguese army under the command of Constantine de Fracansa left Goa in 1560 AD to capture Jaffna and landed at Karaiyoor. After overcoming the resistance of Sangilian’s soldiers at the landing point, the Portuguese army began advancing towards Nallur.

Except for the greatly fortified fortress of Sangilian, the Portuguese were able to capture the rest of the city of Jaffna. Sangilian, in the mean time, set fire to his fortress and went into hiding at Kopay. The Portuguese were unable to find him even though they advanced up to Kopay.

At this time, Sangilian wanted to make peace with the Portuguese. The Portuguese also wanted a peace agreement very badly, as they did not have enough resources to prolong the war forever.

As a result, a peace agreement was signed by the two warring parties, which contained six important clauses. According to the agreement signed, Sangilian would be allowed to continue as king of Jaffna; he would have to pay an yearly tribute to the Portuguese; he should not obstruct people from converting to Christianity; Veethirayan’s treasures that were in the possession of Sangilian to be turned over to the Portuguese; Sangilian should reimburse the expenses incurred by the Portuguese during war; and the island of Mannar to be handed over to the Portuguese. The Portuguese insisted, and Sangilian had to agree to their demand, that the crown prince and two of the king’s ministers be handed over to them to be held as hostages to ensure the implementation of the agreement. This agreement was written in both Tamil and Portuguese languages.

By this agreement Sangilian continued to rule over the Jaffna kingdom, but Portuguese regiments under the command of Fracansa were stationed at Kopay and Nallur. One day, when Fracansa had gone to Elephant Pass on a hunting trip, Sangilian’s army attacked and decimated the Portuguese regiments stationed at Kopay and Nallur. Fracansa, in the mean time, managed to reach the safety of a Portuguese ship that was anchored nearby.

After this encounter, Sangilian tried to negotiate with the Portuguese for the release of the crown prince and his ministers. But that did not succeed. Even though the Portuguese lost this war with Sangilian, they scored a

tremendous victory in another field. The crown prince, whom they had as hostage, converted to Christianity, and later died in Goa in 1571 AD.

Fracansa, taking for granted that the island of Mannar belonged to the Portuguese according to the agreement signed with Sangilian, started building a fortress on the island. Sangilian's vassal king of Mathoddam tried to stop the building of the fortress by the Portuguese, but had to retreat, as he could not withstand the onslaught of the Portuguese cannons.

Fracansa demolished the Hindu temple at Thiruketheesaram and used those granite stones for the construction of his fortress at Mannar. An attempt by Sangilian to capture that fortress ended up in failure. Following this incident, there was an uprising by the people of Jaffna, in which Sangilian was removed from the throne, and his concubine's son, **Puvirasapandaram**, was installed as king. Even though Puvirasapandaram occupied the throne from 1564 to 1565 AD, he was a very weak ruler and was king only in name. Sangilian continued to be the real power behind the throne till his death in 1565 AD. Even though the time of Sangilian's rule was a period of riots and unrest, he is credited for having held the foreigners at bay.

Kasinayinar alias Kunchinayinar

(Pararajasegaran) 1565 – 1570 AD

Prince Kasinayinar, also known by the name of Kunchinayinar, deposed Puvirasapandaram in 1565 AD, and became king of Jaffna with the name of

தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணக் கழகங்கள்

Pararajasegaran. The people of Jaffna did not take kindly towards Pararajasegaran for overthrowing the legitimate king by illegal means. This led to the people seeking the help of George de Melo de Castro, who was the commander-in-chief of the Portuguese forces in Mannar at that time.

The Portuguese, who were waiting for such an opportunity to extend their domination over the Jaffna kingdom, invaded Jaffna, imprisoned Kasinayinar, and crowned another prince as the king of Jaffna according to the wishes of the people. When the Portuguese withdrew from Jaffna, supporters of Kasinayinar killed that prince, released Kasinayinar from prison, and made him the king again. This enraged the Portuguese, who bribed a palace servant of Kasinayinar and had him poison the king.

Periyapillai

(Segarajasegaran) 1570 – 1582 AD

The Portuguese, who arrived in Jaffna following the death of Kasinayinar, crowned another prince by the name of Periyapillai, and made him the king of Jaffna according to the wishes of the people, and named him Segarajasegaran. After completing their mission, the Portuguese went back to Mannar. But, Periyapillai Segarajasegaran always had an inborn desire to chase the Portuguese out of Mannar. Together with the assistance of the soldiers provided by the Nayakka kings of Tangore, Segarajasegaran mounted an attack on the Portuguese fort, but he failed to dislodge them.

Puvirasapandaram

(Pararajasekaran) 1582 – 1592 AD

Periyapillai was succeeded in 1582 AD by Prince Puvirasapandaram under the name of Pararajasekaran, but the Portuguese refused to recognize him as the king of Jaffna. Like all his predecessors, Puvirajasekaran also had the desire to liberate Mannar from the Portuguese, and made all necessary preparations for a war against them. His attack on the Portuguese after years of preparation resulted only in heavy losses for his side. He could not dislodge the Portuguese from Mannar. This did not deter him, and he launched a second attack in 1591 AD. But he could not win this time too.

These attacks on Mannar by the Jaffna kings enraged the Portuguese settlers in Goa. They sent a large army under the command of Andre Furtado de Mendonza to save Mannar and also to subjugate the Jaffna king. A Sinhalese army under the command of Wickramasingha Mudaliyar also joined hands with the Portuguese army on this campaign against Jaffna.

In the war that ensued, the city of Jaffna was looted and the entire royal family was captured and imprisoned by the Portuguese. Realizing that the Tamil army, even though it did not in anyway lack bravery, was no match to the Portuguese army and their modern weapons, Puvirajasekaran made the painful decision to accept the hegemony of the Portuguese. Then, he abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Ethirmanasingan, and bestowed him with the royal name, Pararajasegaran, who would be a vassal to the Portuguese and pay them tribute. The Portuguese agreed to this arrangement, suppressed all the

unruly elements by force, stationed a small number of soldiers in Jaffna and returned to Goa.

Ethirmanasingan

(Pararajasegaran - 1591 – 1615 AD)

In the year 1591 AD, Ethirmanasingan became the king of Jaffna with the royal name of Pararajasegaran. During his reign, seven of his family members were appointed as chieftains to various parts of his kingdom. The Portuguese influence also increased dramatically during his reign, and he provided all the assistance for the Portuguese to propagate the Christian faith among his people. This also created a situation that made it possible for the Portuguese to behave as they wished.

The people, who were enraged by the Portuguese behaviour, approached Wimalatharmasooriyan, the then king of Kandy, for assistance to replace Pararajasegaran with another prince from Rameswaram. When the Portuguese learnt about this, they sent an army in 1592 under the command of Manuel de Attaide to Nallur, and put down the rebellion. In return, Pararajasegaran provided lands and funds for the Portuguese priests to build churches.

The reign of Pararajasegaran turned out to be a period of uprisings, insurgencies and wars. This king, who was still being cursed as one of the main people who sowed the seeds for the foreign domination of the country, died in 1616 AD.

Sangili Kumaran

(1615 – 1619 AD)

From his death bed, Ethirmanasingan, gave the responsibility of looking after his three-year-old son, Luke Kumaran, and making him the king when he came of age, to

Arasakesari, and sent an emissary to Goa to obtain approval from the Portuguese. But, before the emissary could return, Ethirmanasingan passed away. At this time, Prince Sangili Kumaran entered the palace and murdered the entire royal household, sparing only Luke Kumaran.

The Portuguese agreed to the proposal of Luke Kumaran becoming king when he came of age, and confirmed Sangili Kumaran as regent to run the government till that time. But, rapport was lacking between the people and Sangili Kumaran. To eliminate the influential Mudaliyars, who opposed him, Sangili Kumaran sought the intervention of the Tangore king. This angered the Portuguese and they sent an army to Jaffna under the command of Phillip de Olivera.

Arriving in Jaffna, Olivera sent a messenger to Sangili Kumaran to pay up the tribute. Sangili Kumaran promised to pay the tribute, but never did. This enraged Olivera and he declared war against Sangili Kumaran. The Tamil army lost the war, and the Portuguese took prisoners Sangili Kumaran and his family. Sangili Kumaran was deported to Goa where he was beheaded. His wife and Prince Luke Kumaran, the heir to the Jaffna throne, were converted to the Catholic religion. Luke Kumaran's sister was christened Donna Cathrina Thesa when she was baptized.

The period Jaffna kingdom was ruled by Tamil kings can be considered the Golden Age in the history of the Tamil people. The last of the Tamil kings was Sangili Kumaran, and with him the 400-year reign of Tamil kings came to an end in the Jaffna kingdom. The glorious kingdom of the Tamil people lost its independence and became a colony of the Portuguese empire in 1620 AD.

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Jaffna Kingdom and the Arrival of Portuguese

(1621 – 1658 AD)

Tamil kings had ruled the Jaffna kingdom for more than four hundred years. This period is considered as the Golden age in the history of the Jaffna. The rule of Tamil kings over the Jaffna kingdom came to an end with the end of Sangili Kumaran's rule. The Portuguese, who first landed in Ceylon in the year 1505 AD, were able to bring the strong Jaffna kingdom under their control only in 1621 AD, and that too after great effort and enormous losses. Their rule over the Jaffna kingdom lasted 37 years.

After defeating Sangili Kumaran, the Portuguese did not have the inclination to appoint any other member of the Ariyan dynasty to the throne of Jaffna. Major Philip de Olivera took over the administration of the government on behalf of the Portuguese crown in 1621 AD. But, confrontations between Tamil leaders and the Portuguese rulers continued. Even though Tamil soldiers from South India came to the aid of the local leaders, Olivera was able to suppress the insurrection with reinforcements he received from the Portuguese garrisons in Colombo.

In February of 1621, Philip de Olivera made Nallur his administrative centre and demolished the Nallur Kandasamy Temple completely without any trace. With the granite stones obtained from the demolished temple, he built fortified palaces for his own security. All the Hindu temples in the kingdom were razed to the ground by the Portuguese. The priests and temple officials of the temples that were demolished managed to save the temple idols by

dumping them into wells and ponds. The Hindu religion, which had enjoyed the protection of the Ariyan kings, was thrown into disarray by the religious fanaticism and zealotry of the Portuguese.

This situation was prevalent not only in the Jaffna kingdom but also in all the other parts of the island. The Vairavar Andy Temple at Seethawaka with its great granite sculptured architecture was destroyed and all the temple treasures looted by the Portuguese. Likewise, the famous Munneswaram temple was looted of all its treasures in 1575 AD. The Vishnu Temple at Dondra suffered the same fate in 1588AD, and the same thing happened to the Koneswarar Temple at Trincomalee in 1622 AD. These atrocities were committed not only to spread their religion but also to loot the accumulated treasures of those temples.

The Portuguese had resorted to very harsh methods to convert the local population to Christianity. Olivera made proclamations to the effect that people should not practice Hinduism in any form, whether they be worship, prayers, or fasting. Harsh punishments were meted out to those who broke those rules. Catholic churches were built on the sites of the Hindu temples that were demolished. Vast number of people converted to the catholic religion not because they lacked spiritual allegiance to their religion but because of the fear of Olivera's punitive punishments. Those who converted were Catholics only in name but continued to be Hindus at heart. The Portuguese historian, Kairos, had noted that fifty two thousand Tamil people were converted to the Catholic religion in the first two years of the Portuguese rule. Schools were built adjoining the churches under the guise of providing education, but their ulterior motive was to propagate their religion. Students who wished to continue higher education in

Portuguese medium were sent to Goa, which was the main Portuguese administrative and military base in the South Asian region at that time.

The Portuguese divided the Jaffna peninsula and the adjoining islands into thirty-two parishes and built individual churches in each of them. These parishes were given the name, **Koyitpattu**, which is the Tamil translation for the word "parish." This name for "district" is in use even today. In the same manner, Mannar was divided into seven, and the Vanni district into six 'koyitpattus.'

During the reigns of the Ariyan kings, and even before that, North Ceylon Kingdom had a well-developed agricultural economy. But, due to the incessant wars that ensued with the arrival of the Portuguese, agricultural production declined drastically. The Portuguese were more interested in spreading their religion and appropriating the available wealth than in development projects.

In 1626, Constantino de sa de Noranga was appointed Governor of Ceylon by the Portuguese. He banished all the Muslims from the areas under his control as he considered them obstacles to Portuguese trade. The Muslims who were thus exiled asked for asylum from the Kandyan king, who welcomed them and settled them in the Batticaloa district and in a few other areas in his kingdom. As a result, many Muslim villages also came into being in the Central Province.

With the permission of the Kandyan king, the Portuguese built a Fort at Batticaloa in 1626 AD. On the death of Philip de Olivera in 1627, the Portuguese appointed Major Langrod de Seikzas Capiro in his place.

In 1628, he managed to bring Trincomalee and Batticaloa also under Portuguese control. The son of Senevirat, the Kandyan king, declared war against the Portuguese to redeem the Jaffna kingdom for himself, basing his claim to the Jaffna throne on his marriage to Luke Kumaran's sister. But his efforts did not succeed.

The Portuguese continued to follow the same taxation system that was introduced by the Ariyan kings. They collected taxes on clothes, brokerage fees, tobacco, dying roots, alcohol, ferries, death, and the like. Many of these taxes had been in force during the time of the Tamil kings as well. The Portuguese made money by selling honorary titles like "Don," etc., to citizens who were prepared to pay for the privilege of using them with their names. As there were a substantial number of individuals who coveted these titles, the Portuguese made good money from this scheme as well.

It was the Portuguese who first started compiling all the legal deeds of landed properties into a *tome*. Property Deeds written before 1623 AD were written on **palmyrah leaves** and were not clear. The Portuguese collected all the details in a systematic manner and had them recorded in *tomes*. They separated the entire land area into districts, divisions and villages, and collected all the details, such as, the names of those landed properties, the extent of such lands and the owner's name, and had them recorded in detail in those *tomes*. They also continued to follow the civil law, known as "**Thesavalamai**," first introduced by the Tamil kings.

Even though the Portuguese rule lasted only thirty-seven years, the impact of their language and behavioural pattern on the Tamil people of Jaffna continued.

Portuguese words, like "saddai," "kalisan," "kathirai," "mesai," "vanku," "alumari," "kopai," "peenkan," "penai," "kadathasi," and "mesthiri," are still being used in their spoken language by the Tamil people.

Although the Vanni district was also under Portuguese rule, the Vanniars did not accept it, and continued with their confrontations with the Portuguese. To face the problems from the Vanniars, the Portuguese had to adopt a large number of security measures. The atrocities committed by the Portuguese were numerous. Under the Portuguese, the Tamil people lost not only their independence but also their way of life.

The Dutch defeated the Portuguese in 1658, and took over the Jaffna kingdom.

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Vanni Kingdom

Vanni district was always a part and parcel of the traditional Tamil areas of Eela Nadu. It is situated in the northern part of Ceylon and is about two thousand square miles in extent. Because of its close relationship with the Tamil people and being part of the **Tamil Eelam landmass**, it occupies a prominent place in the history of the Tamil people.

Its geographical location, together with other natural assets like the sea, forests, river, and rocky formations, provides the Vanni district with security and natural beauty. This vast area is described as having had the Jaffna lagoon as its northern boundary, Trincomalee district as its eastern boundary, Aruvai Aru as the southern boundary, and Mannar district as the western boundary in "**Manual of the Vanni District**," written by J. P. Louis in 1895 AD.

Vavuniya district covers the southern half of Vanni, and northern half is made up of the Mullaitivu district. From north to south it is seventy-one miles long, and its breadth from east to west is sixty miles. As it was ruled by the **Vanniar clan**, this area came to be known as **Vanni Nadu**.

Before it got the name, Vanni Nadu, this area was known as **Adankapattu**. This area acquired this name as neither the rulers nor the people of this area surrendered their sovereignty to the Anuradhapura rulers or the Jaffna kings. At one point of time, many tiny kingdoms, called Vannimai, had existed in the Batticaloa, Puttalam, and Trincomalee districts. There are historical evidences to

show that Vannimais had also existed in Rajarata, Mayarata, and Ruhunu. But historians are of the opinion that Vanni refers to the area formerly known as Adankapattu.

Recorded history of Vanni lacks contiguity. Lack of proper research, and the failure to record the history of Eelam Tamils in sequence, had resulted in erroneous perception by some that Eelam Tamils were immigrants to the country. To research the history of a country two primary sources are required. One is archeological evidence. The other is material found in the classics. Only if both of these sources are researched together will the true history come to light.

Some information on the history of Vanni can be found in books like **Vaiyapadal**, **Konesar Kalveddu**, **Maddakalappu Manmiyam**, **Kalveddu**, and **Seiyedu**. The journal of English mariner, **Robert Knox**, who came to Ceylon in 1657 AD, and the **Manual of the Vanni District**, written by the English Civil Servant, J. P. Louis, and recent archeological findings, serve as helpful tools to learn about the ancient history of Vanni.

The entire Vanni area was divided into several administrative divisions. They were: Karaichi, and Karunavalpattu in the north; Kudiruppu, Karikaddumoolai, Mulliawalai, Metpattu, Vadakku Karikaddu Moolaihetku, in the east; Naducheddikulam, Sinnacheddikulam, and Kilakku Moolaihetku in the south; Udayavur, Metpattu Thetkyu, and Metpattu Udayavur Kilakku in the center.

There are differences of opinion about as to when the Vanniars actually immigrated to Ceylon. Vaiyapadal says, Vanniars came and settled down in Ceylon in the year

50 BC. Whereas Maddakalapu Manmiyam says, they settled down in Ceylon only in 100 AD.

According to scholars, who researched the history of the Vanniars, these people belonged to the non-Ariyan Akni caste of ancient South India, which was a soldier caste of that time. They also had connection to the ruling families. The book, "Vanni and Vanniars," says that these people were even called "South Indian Rasaputhirars." Even though there are differences of opinion about them, one thing could be said about them with a certain amount of certainty: they were great soldiers, who were greatly honoured by kings and rulers.

Vaiyapadal says, that 60 Vanniars, who came to Ceylon in connection with the wedding of Valasingan, the son of Maruthapiravai, were the first settlers at Adankapattu. One of them had even become a Dissawa. He is supposed to be the forefather of the Sinhalese Vannia caste. Although he disagreed with the last concept, J. P. Louis confirms in his "Vanni and Vanniars" that one of these 60 Vanniars was sent to Anuradhapura as Dissawa.

When describing the Vanni region of 100 years ago, J. P. Louis states that Vanni region covered the Vavuniya and Mullaitivu districts. He also states that Vavuniya got its name from a Vanniar temple trustee by the name of Vavuniyan, who had lived in that area in 1750 AD. He is also said to have renovated the Periyakulam Tank at Vavuniya. At this point of time, 76 percent of the population in Vavuniya were Tamils, and the population of Mullaitivu was 92 percent Tamils. According to the statistics compiled in 1891, there had been only 970 Sinhalese people living in Vavuniya, and only two Sinhalese traders in the entire Mullaitivu district. In the

recent past the demographics have changed entirely in favour of the Sinhalese due to government sponsored colonization of Tamil areas with Sinhalese people.

Vast amount of information is found in the records of **Robert Knox**, the English mariner, who came to Ceylon in 1657 AD. He had been a prisoner of the Kandyan king for 18 years. He had mentioned that when he escaped from the prison and was fleeing, he passed a place called **Nuwarakalaviya**, and when he spoke to the inhabitants there in Sinhalese, he says, those people could not understand even a single word of that language. He had only noted that the local residents there spoke some other language, but did not specifically say what their language was.

According to his records, the people living in the Anuradhapura district spoke Malabar language and they were not Sinhalese. The word "Malabar" here refers to Tamil language and "Malabar king" refers to the Tamil-speaking Vanni king. From the notes of Robert Knox, it becomes clear that the rule of Tamil kings had extended up to Anuradhapura, and that Tamil people had been living in those areas.

Ancient "burial pots" (Muthumakkal Thalzi) discovered at Kunchu Paranthan in 1985 shows that a civilized settlement had been there in the olden days. Another example is the ancient stone inscription containing the words "Eelam" and "Eela" discovered during an archeological excavation at Punakari.

Many settlements of ancient minor rulers in the Vanni region are now lying deserted and covered with jungle. The presence of abandoned irrigation tanks and

ruins of buildings bear witness to the early civilization that existed in ancient Vanni. Iratperiyakulam and Pavatkulam are two of the major irrigation tanks fed by Aruvi Aru that flows through the southern part of Vanni. The existence of rivers, Manal Aru, Pali Aru, Nayaru, and Peraru; and the irrigation tanks, Kariyalai Kulam, Nagapaduvan Kulam, Puthumurippu Kulam, Akkarayankulam, Thannimurippu Kulam, Kurunthan Kulam, Alaikallu Poddakulam, and Pandarakulam would show the extent of fertility of this region. Vanni district, which was known earlier as Adankapattu, is made up of many Vannimais. They are: Panankamam, Melpattu, Mulliawalai, Karunavalpattu, Karikaddumoolai, Thennanmarapadi,

Even during the time of Portuguese domination over Jaffna, Vanni had continued to be an independent and sovereign kingdom. The opposition and resistance from the Tamil kings of Jaffna, and the passion for freedom and independence of the Vanni rulers, were the main reasons for the failure of the Portuguese to extend their domination over Vanni. When the Dutch captured Jaffna from the Portuguese, they established a company to bring Vanni also under their control. On the unfounded notion that Vanni also belonged to them, the Dutch demanded the Vanni king to pay tribute to them, and also to attend the Governor's Court. The Vanni king, although he accepted these demands in principle, never bothered to implement any of them. Kailaya Vanniyan, who was the ruler of Panankamam, did not attend the Dutch Governor's Court for twelve years. The Dutch did not take any action against him. The Dutch, at that time, preferred to ignore the situation than seeking a confrontation with the Vanni king and creating animosity. They had an inner fear that the Vanni king might join forces with the Kandyan king and oppose them.

There had been a number of separate kingdoms in Ceylon before the arrival of the Portuguese. They were the **Jaffna kingdom, Anuradhapura kingdom, Polonnaruwa kingdom, Kandyan kingdom, Kotte kingdom, Seethawaka kingdom, and Vanni kingdom.** Even though the Vanni kingdom had not been described fully in any of the available historical records, recent research on the artifacts discovered during archeological excavations had brought to light the glory of this kingdom.

Pandaravanniyan

The last Tamil king of the independent and sovereign kingdom of Vanni was **Kulasekaram Vairamuthu Pandaravanniyan**, a great military leader, who bravely resisted all forms of foreign domination. He was born in 1777 AD.

During the Dutch rule, **Don Phillip Nallamapanan, Don Casper Kowsayinar, Hankai Narayanan, Periyameyinar, Ambalavanniyan, Sethukavala vanniyan, Don Casper Nichenthiriyar, Nallanachiyar, and Kailayavanniyan had ruled the Vavuniya region of Vanni. Periyavanniyan, Sinnavanniyan, Ilanchinkamapanan, Thidaveera singamapanan, and Thisaiveeramapanan ruled Mullaitivu region, which was also a part of Vanni.** During the latter part of the Dutch rule (1658-1796) and the beginning of the British rule (1796-1948), the Vanni kingdom was ruled by **Pandaravanniyan.**

Vanniyan had been brave minor rulers during the time of Tamil and Sinhalese kings, and also during the

period of foreign rule. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch failed in their attempt to bring Vanni under their domination. The British also made great efforts to bring Vanni under their rule.

Pandaravanniyan, the last king, occupies a very important place in the history of Vanni because of bravery. Some historians are of the opinion that he was from Mullaitivu. Whereas some others say, he came from Nuwarakaliya. The latter may be true because he spent his last days at Nuwarakaliya. Nuwarakaliya is a region situated south of Anuradhapura, which is now a Sinhalese area. But there are evidences to show that this was a Tamil area in the 18th century.

Robert Knox mentioned that the people of Nuwarakaliya could not understand him when he spoke to them in Sinhalese whilst he was fleeing from the captivity of the Kandyan king, and that the people there spoke Malabar language (Tamil).

As Pandaravanniyan did have Pandarikulam as his seat of government, and all his activities had taken place in the Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts, there is reason to believe that the region he ruled could have been Mullaitivu. Pandaravanniyan divided Vanni into districts, and handed over the administration of the Trincomalee district to his elder sister Nallanachchi and Panankamam to his younger sister, Umaichinachchi.

Jaffna kingdom fell to the Portuguese in 1658 AD, and was captured from them by the Dutch in 1796 AD. During the entire period of Portuguese and Dutch rule in Jaffna, they could not bring Vanni under their control, and it continued to be a sovereign entity. Even though the

British, who captured Jaffna from the Dutch, considered Vanni as their colony, the kings of Vanni refused to accept it and continued as independent rulers. In fact, the British built the **Pyl Fort** at Elephant Pass and **Blochuter Fort** at Vettilaikerni as defense against attacks from or invasion by the Vanniars.

The British conferred the titles of **Vanniyaar**, **Mudaliyaar**, and **Udayaar** to people who collaborated with them, and with the help of these collaborators made their efforts to capture Vanni. **Kakkaivanniyan** was the most notorious and traitorous among those collaborators.

Whilst Pandaravanniyan was away to assist the Kandyan king, the British, who were waiting for such an opportunity, captured Mullaitivu. But, Pandaravanniyan came back, and recaptured Mullaitivu in August 1803, after destroying the British Government House and their Mullaitivu Fort. For aiding Pandaravanniyan in that war, Kumarasekara Mudaliyaar and his friends were hanged by the British. The place they were hanged is still known as **Thookumarathady** (the place of the gallows).

After strengthening their forces, the British attacked Mullaitivu again – this time from three fronts. The attack from Trincomalee was led by **Edward Michin**, and **Lieutenant John Jovel** led regiment from Jaffna. **Captain Von Driberg**, who led the regiment from Mannar, attacked Pandaravanniyan's forces at Katpurapullu, which is situated near the 6th milepost along the Thannioottu-Puliyankulam road. As Pandaravanniyan's forces did not anticipate this attack, they were taken unawares, and were defeated by Captain Von Driberg on October 31, 1803. In that war, the British also captured the cannon given to

Pandaravanniyan by the Kandyan king, Kannusamy (Sri Wickremarajasinghe).

To commemorate this victory, Captain Von Driberg erected a granite stone monument at that site with the inscriptions "HERE ABOUTS CAPTAIN VON DRIBERG DEFEATED PANDARA VAWNIYAN OCT 31ST 1803." This place is now called Katsilaimadu (the place of the stone monument). The British presented the village of Pandarakulam to Captain Von Driberg as a prize for defeating Pandaravanniyan. This Captain Von Driberg was a Dutch army officer who opted to serve under the British, after the Dutch handed over the coastal areas of Ceylon to the British in accordance with the "**Emion Agreement**" signed between both the countries.

Even after suffering defeat at the hands of Captain Driberg, Pandaravanniyan did not give up his resistance to the British aggression. He continued his attacks on the British in the Kilakkumoolai (Eastern Sector) and Thetkumoolai (Southern Sector). As a result, the British had to strengthen their defenses in all the border regions of Vavuniya. In September of 1810, Mudaliyar Kathirkamanayagam passed information to Turner, the British Collector, that Pandaravanniyan was preparing to attack Vavuniya district with the help of the Kandy Dissawa.

To counter the impending attack by Pandaravanniyan, the British strengthened their forces, and launched a three-pronged preemptive attack against Pandaravanniyan from Trincomalee, Mannar and Jaffna. Neither party could score any victory in that encounter. At the next confrontation that took place at Udayavur, Pandaravanniyan got seriously wounded. Even though his

soldiers managed to evacuate him to Panankamam, Pandaravanniyan succumbed to his injuries the following day.

There are also records to the effect that Pandaravanniyan had a lover by the name of **Kuruvichinachchi**, and that she committed suicide by eating poisonous yam when she heard about his death. The place Kuruvichinachchi lived came to be known as **Kathaliyar Sammankulam**. Kuruvichchai Aru, the tributary of Peraru, also got that name from Kuruvichinachchi. Pandaravanniyan's sister, Nallanachchi, also committed suicide by consuming poisonous yam.

Following the death of Pandaravanniyan, Vanni kingdom fell to the British. Even though tales about Pandaravanniyan and the Vanni kingdom abound in folklore, dramas and plays, only skeletal references to them are seen in the historical records of Ceylon. Serious academic research on the history of Vanni and that of its brave ruler, who fought for and sacrificed his life for the freedom of his motherland, is a crying need for the Tamil people at this time of their history.

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Jaffna Kingdom and the Arrival of Dutch

During the time when Portuguese colonial rule was spreading all over South Asia and East Asia, the Dutch also started arriving in the region for trade from 1595. In the year 1602, a Dutch Admiral by the name of **Spielberg** arrived in Ceylon and, with the help of the Vanni minor-ruler who was living in Batticaloa, met the Kandyan king, Wimaladharm. The Kandyan king, who hated the activities of the Portuguese, thought of getting rid of them from the country with the help of the Dutch. With that in mind, the Kandyan king not only agreed to establish trade relations with the Dutch, but also allowed them to build fortresses in the country.

This agreement between the Kandyan king and the Dutch highly worried the Portuguese and they started strengthening their defenses by building fortresses at Trincomalee, Mannar, Batticaloa and Galle. The Dutch promised to help the Kandyan king in any war between the Kandyan king and the Portuguese if he continued to cooperate with them.

In 1612, the Portuguese captured the Dutch Fort at Kottiarum. The Dutch, then, built a fort at Trincomalee in 1622, and another one at Batticaloa in 1627. Following that, they managed to capture the Portuguese Forts at Negombo, Galle, and Matara in 1639. To avoid the continuation of their confrontations, the Dutch and the Portuguese signed a truce in 1646 and agreed to maintain the *status quo*, i.e., the forts would belong to whoever was occupying them at that particular point of time.

But, this agreement did not last for long, and war erupted again between the Portuguese and the Dutch in 1652. The Dutch captured Kalutara and Colombo in 1656. In 1658, the Jaffna region also fell into their hands. The Portuguese rule was not only dominated by their religious fervour but was also of an inhuman nature. But the Dutch, on the other hand, were interested only in expanding their trade. After bringing Jaffna under their control, the Dutch transferred the administration of Jaffna to their Governor, resident in Colombo; and *Commandeurs* were appointed by the Governor to administer those areas that had been brought under their control.

The Dutch, like the Portuguese, had the Jaffna district divided into four Districts, and thirty-two Divisions (Koyilpattus). The administration of Mannar, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa districts were also handed over to the Jaffna *Commandeur*. Tamil names of all the offshore islands of the Jaffna peninsula were changed to Dutch names. Karaitivu was changed to Amsterdam, Urathurai to Kayts, Thannitivu to Laydon, Pungudutivu to Middleberg, Nainativu to Harlem, Analativu to Rotterdam, Neduntivu to Delft, and Iranativu to Hoen.

The first Dutch *Commandeur* of Jaffna was Ryckloff Van Goens, and a Provincial Council was established to assist him. This council administered the area through officers appointed by them. According to statistics collected by this council, Jaffna had a population of 120,000 in 1658. The administrative procedures of the Dutch were very similar to that of the Portuguese.

Law Courts were established in Jaffna like the ones they had established in Colombo. Cases that could not be resolved by the Jaffna Courts were transferred to the

Colombo Courts for hearing. In 1707, Claasz Isaacs, who was the Dissawa of Jaffna at that time, recorded in a systematic manner all the societal and cultural traditions of the Jaffna people and published them in book form. The Dutch incorporated these traditions in the Civil Laws concerning property rights. They were fully based on the age-old Thesavalamai Laws of the Jaffna people.

The Dutch continued to treat the former Tamil kingdom of Jaffna and the former Sinhalese kingdom of Kotte as separate entities and administered them separately. They recognized the fact that the Tamils and the Sinhalese were two completely different races, speaking different languages, had different cultures, and followed different religions. They structured their civil administration as well as the judicial system on that basis. **They based the civil laws for the Tamils on the Thesavalamai traditions, and the civil laws for the Sinhalese were based on the Rajakaria Nilamanya system.**

The Dutch divided the area they captured in Ceylon into six administrative districts. They were: Jaffna District, Kalpitiya District, Trincomalee District, Batticaloa District, Galle District, and Colombo District. Except for the Colombo and Galle Districts, the other four districts had been traditional Tamil homelands even during the time of the Dutch rule. Even then, the Dutch did amalgamate a few Tamil areas with the Sinhalese Districts of Galle and Colombo for administrative convenience. The entire area from Kumbukan River to Walawa Ganga had been a Tamil region. Within this area was situated the aboriginal settlements of the Mahagama and a few Vanni principalities. This Tamil area was amalgamated with the Sinhalese district of Galle by the Dutch. They amalgamated another traditional Tamil area, extending

from Deduru Oya to Mahaoya, with the Sinhalese district of Colombo.

For revenue, the Dutch collected a Head Tax, taxes on landed properties, trees, coconut palms, tobacco, clothes, marriages, deaths, markets, taverns, brokerage, slaves, and use of port facilities. The Portuguese introduced the Catholic religion into Ceylon, and the Dutch engaged in converting people to Protestant Christianity. They converted Catholic churches built by the Portuguese into Protestant churches. In 1689, Lord of Mydrecht not only destroyed all the Catholic churches and monasteries, but also established a seminary to train Protestant priests. Instructions in that seminary were conducted in seven languages: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Dutch, Portuguese, Sinhalese and Tamil.

They had the Bible translated into Tamil to facilitate conversion of Tamil people to Christianity. Rev. Baldeus vehemently propagated the Protestant religion among the Tamil people of Jaffna from 1658 to 1665. He had also written several books on the cultural traditions of the local population, and about the rituals followed in the Dutch Reformed Church.

In the beginning, the Dutch concentrated only on developing their trade and commerce, and not so much on spreading their religion. Later, they took a keen interest in the religious side of the people's lives, and even gave permission to renovate the Hindu temples that were destroyed by the Portuguese and also for the building of new temples. It was during this time of the Dutch rule, Vaithilinga Chettiar built Vannarpannai Sivan Temple in 1787, and its Kumbabishekam (consecration ceremony) was held in 1791. The Dutch also granted permission to

the trustees for the renovation of the Nallur Kandasamy Temple, which was earlier razed to the ground and a church built on that site by the Portuguese. The Brahmin priests of that temple, in the mean time, had built a tiny temple on one of their own private lands (Brahmana Valavu) to continue their worship.

The Dutch not only renovated all the former Portuguese Forts but also built a new one in Jaffna in 1695, using stones from the coral reefs nearby. They divided Vanni region into several separate units and left them in charge of Vanniars. In the beginning, the minor rulers of Vanni were also treated with due respect by the Dutch. Bravery of the Vanni people and the fear that they might join hands with the Kandyan king if they were alienated, were the reasons for this Dutch magnanimity.

Even though the main objectives were trade and commerce, it should be mentioned to their credit that, during their rule, the Dutch gave due respect to the culture and traditions of the Tamil people, followed their tax system and judicial practices in their administration of the area. Although they were also engaged in spreading their religion, they did not resort to any harsh methods. In 1795, the Jaffna kingdom passed from the hands of the Dutch to the British.

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Eelam and Eelam Tamils during British Rule

When foreigners set foot in the country for the first time, there had been indigenous rulers in Ceylon. There was an independent and sovereign Jaffna kingdom in the north, a Kandyan kingdom in the center, and Kotte kingdom in the southwest part of the country. Even after all the other kingdoms, except Kandy, had fallen into the hands of foreigners, Jaffna kingdom had continued to be independent.

Like the Portuguese, Dutch, and the French, who were actively engaged in expanding their overseas trade, the British also entered the field. Trincomalee, which has been a Tamil area from time immemorial, is situated in the Eastern Province of Eelam. It is blessed with one of the best natural harbours in the world, and is situated along one of the main sea routes to the East from Europe. As the first step towards monopolizing European trade with East Asian countries, the Britishers captured this natural harbour in 1795. From there they managed to take control of all the other ports in the country that were under Dutch control. The Tamil regions of Eelam fell to the British in 1795. In 1796, they succeeded in capturing Kotte kingdom as well.

Even after the fall of the Jaffna and Kotte kingdoms to the British, the Kandyan kingdom continued to defend itself from foreign aggression till 1815. The British administered both Jaffna and Kotte from their main base at Madras in South India. As there had been frequent insurrections against the British rule in Ceylon, the British decided to appoint a separate Governor for Ceylon. In 1798, Frederick North was appointed the first Governor,

Ceylon was declared a British colony in 1802. By that time, the British had brought almost the entire country, except the Kandyan kingdom, under their control.

The Kandyan ruler did not pay any tribute to either the Dutch or to the British, and continued to be a sovereign state. Rajasingan, the ruler of Kandy during that period of time (who is referred to as Wickremarajasinghe in history books), was a Tamil king. Robert Brownrigg succeeded Frederick North as the Governor of Ceylon in 1812.

Wickremarajasinghe was betrayed by some of his chieftains, and was captured by the British. Under the agreement signed between the Kandyan chieftains and the British in 1815 the Kandyan kingdom also came under British rule. This agreement is known as the Kandyan Convention, and with the signing of this agreement, the entire country was brought under British rule, and they continued to govern Ceylon till they granted independence to the country in 1948.

After the entire country came under British rule, the economy of the country became mainly export oriented. East India Company's monopoly of the cinnamon trade was done away with and was opened to others as well. Coffee plantations were developed on a commercial scale. Efforts were also made by the British to streamline the political administration of the country.

The British sent William Holbrook and Charles Cameron to Ceylon to suggest reforms and also to oversee the implementation of their proposals. King William the Fourth was the king of England during that time. William Holbrook researched the existing political system of the country and submitted a detailed report and

recommendations to the King of England. In his report, Holbrook recommended the establishment of an Administrative Council and a Legislative Council, in which the Europeans as well as the Ceylonese were to be represented.

Holbrook's recommendations were accepted by the British Parliament and the boundaries of the Sinhalese and Tamil areas were redrawn for administrative convenience. The areas of the country, which had hitherto existed as separate Jaffna, Kotte and Kandyan kingdoms, were amalgamated into one entity, and common administrative as well as legal systems were introduced in 1833 AD.

At first, in order to facilitate easy administration, the British divided the country into five provinces. They were the Northern Province, Eastern Province, Southern Province, Western Province, and Central Province. The administrative capitals of these provinces were Jaffna, Trincomalee, Galle, Colombo and Kandy respectively.

In 1845 AD, in order to ease the administrative burden, Chilaw, Puttalam and Kurunegala were removed from the Western Province and made into a sixth and separate Northwestern Province. For the same reason, in 1873, Anuradhapura was removed from the Northern Province and amalgamated with Thammankadavai by Gregory, the then British Governor of Ceylon, which then became the seventh province, called the North Central Province. Similarly, Uva Province was established in 1886 out of the Badulla, Wellawaya and Buttala areas. And the ninth province of Sabragamuwa, consisting of Kegalle and Ratnapura, was established in 1889.

In the process of re-drawing the boundaries whilst creating new provinces, several traditional Tamil areas were removed from the Northern and Eastern Provinces and amalgamated with other predominantly Sinhalese provinces. In the meantime, the Head Tax was also abolished by the British administration. With the introduction of the new administrative system, Tamil people not only lost many of their traditional areas but also many of their traditions.

In accordance with the recommendations made by Holbrook, a Legislative Council was established in 1835, made up of nine government officials and six non-official members, all of whom were appointed by the Governor. Out of the six non-official members, three were to be Europeans and the other three from the Ceylonese community. On the recommendations of Holbrook, the entire country was also brought under a unified political administrative system, which continued till 1910 AD.

Sir Muthukumaraswamy had been a member of this Legislative Council from 1862 to 1879. Following the death of Sir Muthukumaraswamy in 1879, his son-in-law, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, was appointed to fill the resultant vacancy. Sir P. Ramanathan's opinions were highly respected in political circles at that time, and he was considered a national leader.

The Tamil and Sinhalese political leaders of that time vehemently advocated the abolition of the racially based electoral system, and it was accepted by the British administration. The number of non-official representatives was also increased to ten in the reconstituted council. In the first elections for the new council that was held in 1912, Sir P. Ramanathan defeated the Sinhalese candidate.

Dr. Marcus Fernando, for the seat reserved for the "Educated Class." When the Sinhalese population was badly affected during the Muslim-Sinhalese riot, Sir P. Ramanathan took their case personally to the English Parliament and argued on their behalf. This advocate of self-government died in 1930.

Sir P. Ramanathan's brother, Sir P. Arunachalam was a founder-member of the Ceylon National Congress that was founded in 1919, and had also served as its president. This was a national political party of Tamils as well as the Sinhalese. There was no racial differentiation of any sort at the beginning, and it was to the credit of the party that it elected a Tamil person as its president. But that situation changed with the change of attitude of the Sinhalese politicians, and pushed the Tamils to agitate for self-determination.

With the introduction of the system of racial representation the national feeling declined. Knowing very well that this system was going to lead to a polarization of the Sinhalese and Tamils races into two different camps, Sir. P. Ramanathan convened a meeting of the National Congress to discuss the issue. The Tamil people at that time opposed the electoral system based on race, and supported representation on a regional basis.

In 1922, Sir James Peiris and E.J.Samarawickrema, two leading members of the Ceylon National Congress, gave an undertaking in writing that a seat in the Legislative Council would be reserved for Sir P. Arunachalam. But his proposal to reserve an electorate in the Western Province for the Tamils was turned down by the Sinhalese members who were in the majority. As a result, Sir P. Arunachalam and some of the Tamil members resigned from the party.

Tamil political leaders should have realized at that time the seriousness of the situation and taken appropriate action. **Sir P. Arunachalam**, who resigned from the National Congress, formed a separate organization for the Tamils called "**Mahajana Sabha**" with regional representation as its mandate.

Following the call for further reforms by the Ceylonese people, the British administration made amendments to the constitution in 1924 and increased the number of representatives to forty-six. In that reconstituted council, twelve members were to be appointed by the Governor and the balance thirty-four were to be elected by the people. Out of this thirty-four, twenty-three were to be elected on a regional basis and six to be elected on a racial basis. The most notable feature in the new council was the provision for a Tamil representative from the Western Province (Colombo), a proposal that was earlier rejected by the Ceylon National Congress. But there were other shortcomings. All the people did not qualify to vote. Only about four percent of the population was entitled to this privilege.

During this time, agitation for independence from British rule was on the rise in the neighbouring country of India, and the influence of it was spreading to Ceylon as well. As a countermeasure to stem the demand for independence, and also to placate the Ceylonese politicians, the British proposed to introduce further political reforms in the country. They sent a Royal Commission to Ceylon in 1927 under the leadership of Lord Donoughmore to explore the situation and to make recommendations. The arrival of the Donoughmore Commission did not create any favourable situation for the Tamils. The Tamils demanded equal representation for the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The

Royal Commission rejected the demands of the Tamils and recommended the creation of electoral divisions based on regional lines and not on communal or racial basis. This recommendation was the beginning of the Tamils losing their rights and privileges. The Tamil leaders of that time also failed to realize that the main reason for this recommendation was to create a rift in the race relations of the two communities.

On the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission, the number of seats in the Legislative Council was increased to 61, and the boundaries of the electorates re-drawn on regional lines. For the newly constituted council, 50 members were to be elected by the people, eight members to be appointed by the Governor, and three seats reserved for government officials.

Although Tamil leaders opposed this proposal of regional representation, it did not produce any results. As a result, progressive-minded Tamil youths of Jaffna formed an organization called the Youth Congress, and the Jaffna people boycotted the elections for the new assembly held in 1931. Thirty-eight Sinhalese and six Tamil members were elected, but the four electorates of the Jaffna Peninsula were left unrepresented in the council.

All the cabinet ministers in 1934 were Sinhalese. The minority races were completely ignored. Some Tamil political leaders came to the conclusion that it was the direct result of the boycott of the elections by the Jaffna population, and that it was not in the best interests of the Tamils. In the general election that was held in 1936, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam contested and won a seat for the newly constituted State Council that was established on the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission. In

that election, Mr. Philip Gunawardena and Dr. N. M. Perera were also elected from the South.

Fearing the Tamils would continue to be adversely affected and discriminated against, like what happened in the cabinet that was formed in 1934, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam submitted a proposal of equal representation for the majority Sinhalese and the rest of the minority races. His proposal was to allocate fifty percent of the seats to the Sinhalese, and the other fifty percent reserved for the minority races. It was the only way to prevent discriminatory legislations being passed in the House, he argued. This came to be widely referred to as the "Fifty-fifty Proposal." If the fifty-fifty proposals of Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam had been accepted, the house would have passed no discriminatory legislation affecting the minorities.

In May 1944, **Mr. J. R. Jayawardena** submitted a proposal in the House to make Sinhala the official language of the country. Mr. V. Nalliah proposed an amendment to make both Sinhala and Tamil official languages of the country. Mr. Nalliah's amendment was defeated, and the "**Sinhala Only**" proposal by Mr. Jayawardena was passed by the House. Following this incident, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam formed the All Ceylon Tamil Congress in August 1944, to fight for the rights of the Tamil people.

A Royal Commission arrived in Ceylon in 1944 led by **Lord Soulbury** to explore possible reforms to the political system in the country. In its hearings that were held at the Colombo Town Hall in February 1945, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress presented its case, which lasted for two full days. Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam submitted to the Commission the fact that **the Tamils were an indigenous**

people who had their own independent kingdom up to the time of the arrival of Europeans to the island. He explained in detail the acts of discrimination perpetuated against the Tamil people by the communal minded Sinhalese politicians. He also pointed out the government-sponsored colonization of Tamil areas with Sinhalese people during the time of Mr. D. S. Senanayake, as Minister of Agriculture and Lands. Although Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam argued vehemently that his 50-50 proposal was the only solution to the problems minorities are faced with, the Soulbury Commission did not accept his proposals.

The Soulbury Commission informed that whilst it rejected the proposal for equal representation, Section 29 of the Constitution, it had recommended, would provide all the necessary constitutional safeguards to the minorities. This section was incorporated in the constitution by the commission with the mistaken belief that the Sinhalese would get 65 percent of the representation and the minorities 35 percent. On the surface, this section gave an impression that it did not provide undue advantage to any religion or race or discriminated against religion or race. But the Sinhalese politicians were able to remove this section from the constitution completely with impunity.

When the new constitution was debated in the House, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, who was the Leader of the House at that time, made the declaration, "**I give a solemn undertaking to the minority races. You need not fear any discrimination.**" This very same person ignored all the proposals made by the minorities when the issue of a National Flag came up in the House, and implemented all the proposals put forward by the majority race.

Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam and other members of the Tamil Congress boycotted the voting when Section 29 came up for voting in the House. All the safeguards provided for the minorities in Section 29 were completely ignored by the Sinhalese majority in the House when they passed the Citizenship Act and the Official language Act.

When the proposed Soulbury Constitution was taken up for voting in the House, 54 members voted for, and 3 members – including one Kandyan Sinhalese – voted against the motion. Members of the Tamil Congress did not take part in the voting. On the recommendations made by the Soulbury Commission, **the British granted independence to Ceylon on February 4, 1948.** And, Ceylon became a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations accepting the British monarch as the Head of the State. This political status can be compared to that of a Dominion.

Elections for the proposed Parliament were held in August 1947, but the **Parliament was ceremoniously inaugurated only on February 4, 1948.** Mr. D. S. Senanayake became the first Prime Minister of Ceylon. When the question of a National Flag came up, Tamil members proposed that **Adam's Peak** – a place venerated by all the religious groups in the country – be the emblem on the flag. Mr. D. S. Senanayake rejected that proposal and had the figure of a lion embossed on the national flag to satisfy the Sinhalese people.

Tamil political leaders complained that the independence of the Tamil people that was robbed by the British, when they captured the country, was not returned to them when the British left the country in 1948. The British did not realize that when they granted independence

to the country they were actually handing over the political power only to the Sinhalese people. They also failed to realize the impending dangers the minorities would face under such an arrangement. The “divide and rule” policies of the British from the very beginning is the root cause for all injustices perpetuated on the Tamil people by the majority Sinhalese race, and the present freedom struggle of the Tamils to regain their homeland.

It was due to the reluctance of the British to even explore the feasibility of a race-based representation that the indigenous Tamil people were reduced to a minority and Ceylon turned into a Buddhist country. The fact of the situation is, the freedom and rights the Tamil people lost to the Portuguese in 1619, had passed through the hands of the Dutch and the British, and are now in the hands of the Sinhalese since the 4th of February, 1948.

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The Situation of Eelam Tamils in Independent Ceylon

Even after Ceylon was declared an independent nation, Tamil people were undergoing various types of hardships and discrimination at the hands of the Sinhalese-dominated government. Discrimination against the Tamils started raising its head even before the end of the first year of independence. With the passing of the Citizenship Act the following year, one million Tamils of Indian descent lost their citizenship and franchise.

These were the descendents of the people the British brought from South India in 1827 to work on their tea plantations in the central hill country. Because of that, they were called "**Indian Tamils**." They were considered as citizens by the British and enjoyed voting rights even during the first parliamentary elections held in 1947. At that election, they were able to elect seven members from their community to parliament. In addition, they were in a position to determine the outcome in another 14 electorates. The discriminatory and communal Citizenship Act of 1949 deprived them of their citizenship as well as their right to vote. The very people who developed the economy of Ceylon with the sweat of their brows became "**stateless**."

This discriminatory legislation infuriated the Tamil people. But D. S. Senanayake was able to overcome the possibility of Tamil riots, and opposition from the Indian and British governments, with diplomacy and deceit. Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam fell for that ruse and joined Senanayake's cabinet as Minister of Industries and

Fisheries with the hope that cooperation with the government would enable him to develop the Tamil areas.

The Citizenship Act that deprived a million Tamils of their voting rights caused a split in the All Ceylon Tamil Congress. Messers. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, C. Vanniasingam and a few others resigned from the Tamil Congress and formed the **Federal Party**. Their main platform was a federal constitution for the country under which the Tamils could live with self-respect and on equal terms with the Sinhalese.

Shortly after this, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike also left the United National Party over a difference of opinion about seniority, and formed his own political party calling it the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. There was tremendous support from the Sinhalese people for this new political party, which enabled the party to score a landslide victory in the general elections held in 1956, and making its leader, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the Prime Minister. In the same elections, the Federal Party (jhpouRf:fl:rp) also scored tremendous victory in the Tamil areas. The Federal Party planted the seeds of Tamil nationalism the same way the Sri Lanka Freedom Party did for Sinhalese nationalism.

The landslide victory of Mr. Bandaranaike gave the Sinhalese people a notion that the government and the parliament belonged only to the Sinhalese. Mr. Bandaranaike submitted a motion in the parliament to make "**Sinhala only**" the official language of the country. This was in contrary to the election pledge given by Mr. Bandaranaike that Sinhalese and Tamil would be made the official languages of the country.

On June 5, 1956, to show their opposition to the discriminatory "Sinhala only" legislation, the Federal Party members of parliament staged a non-violent protest (Satyagraha) on the Galle Face Green opposite the Parliament. The Sinhalese police on the orders of the government to break up their demonstration attacked these peaceful demonstrators (satyagrahis). Mr. Bandaranaike, who was watching this attack from a balcony of the parliament building, did not take any action to stop this wanton attack. As rumour spread that Tamils were trying to forcibly takeover the parliament, an anti-Tamil riot flared up in Colombo, Galoya, and many other places, in which more than 150 innocent Tamils were murdered and properties belonging to the Tamils were looted and burnt.

The anti-Tamil riots of 1956 changed the political outlook of the Tamil people and the Federal Party. Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam and his supporters met and decided to continue their non-violent struggle till they achieved their goal of self-determination.

With the passing of the "Sinhala only" Act, Tamil youths were deprived of their employment opportunities and Tamil government servants lost their promotional prospects. All official correspondence between the government and the Tamil people were conducted only in the Sinhalese language. In that situation, the Tamils were left with no other alternative but to continue their non-violent struggle against the "Sinhala only" policy of the government.

To bring about an amicable settlement to the burning issues of the day, a pact was signed between the Prime Minister, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, and the Federal party leader, Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam on

July 27, 1957. In the pact that was signed, which came to be known as the **Banda-Chelva Pact**, it was agreed to establish a Regional Council for the Tamil areas, in which Tamil would be the administrative language. .

The United National Party opposed this pact and the leader of that party, Mr. J. R. Jayawardena, organized a protest march from the Galle Face Green in Colombo all the way to Kandy. Buddhist Priests organized a mass demonstration in front of Prime Minister Bandaranaike's residence. Bandaranaike succumbed to the pressures from the Buddhist clergy and abrogated the pact he signed with Mr. Chelvanayakam. This was followed by a flare-up of another anti-Tamil riot on May 23, 1958, in which numerous Tamils living in the southern part of the country were massacred. Some of them were even burnt alive, and Tamil women were raped. As usual, properties of the Tamil people were looted and burnt.

More than 12,000 Tamils were rendered homeless and became refugees in their own country. Under the pretext of providing them with security, the government sent them by ships to Jaffna in the north. More than 1,000 innocent Tamils were massacred in this riot, and all the Tamil members of parliament were imprisoned. Not satisfied with the "Sinhala only" Act, the Bandaranaike government continued with its efforts to annihilate the Tamil language and the Tamil people. It became the standard practice of all the successive Sinhalese governments to unleash pogroms against the innocent Tamil people whenever they were faced with economic or other serious problems to divert the attention of the Sinhalese masses away from those pressing issues. The idea behind it was to divert the attention of the Sinhalese

masses from immediate problems and also to weaken the resolve of the Tamil people at the same time.

The Bandaranaike government succeeded beautifully in diverting the attention of the Sinhalese masses from pressing issues, but failed miserably in its attempt to weaken the resolve of the Tamil people. Instead of weakening the Tamils, the government-backed communal riots not only brought about more unity among the Tamil people but also increased their thirst for freedom. By sending Tamil people to the North and East during times of communal riots, the government had accepted the fact that those areas belong to the Tamils where they could live in safety and security. At the same time, the Tamil people also arrived at the conclusion that the idea of a united Ceylon would always prove to be detrimental to them, and that the only place that could provide them safety and security was their own traditional homeland. The need for a separate homeland for the Tamils was, in fact, created by the Sinhalese communal elements.

Even after Bandaranaike abrogated the Banda-Chelva pact, opposition for him from the Sinhalese extremists did not abate. He was accused of trying to give concessions to the Tamils, and was assassinated by a Buddhist Priest, Somarama Thero, on September 25, 1959. Mr. W. Dahanayake succeeded Bandaranaike as the Interim Prime Minister.

In the General Elections of 1960, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party under the leadership of Bandaranaike's widow, Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike, won the largest number of seats and formed the government. Her election promise, that she would continue to implement her late husband's policies, helped her a great deal in winning the

election. In the talks that were held prior to the 1960 elections, Mrs. Bandaranaike promised the Federal party that all reasonable demands of the Tamils would be met if she comes to power. When the elections ended with a landslide victory for the Sri Lanka Freedom party, the promise given to the Federal Party was conveniently forgotten and the government started implementing its "Sinhala only" policy with increased vigour. The Tamils and Tamil areas were completely neglected.

In February 1961, Mrs. Bandaranaike enacted legislation to make **Sinhalese to be the language of the law courts** as well. To demonstrate their opposition to this bill, the Federal Party started a 'satyagraha' campaign at the Jaffna Kachcheri, which was then extended to Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Mannar and Batticaloa. There was tremendous popular support for this non-violent democratic demonstration from among the Tamil population. Even the Muslim population in the Eastern Province took part in that campaign against the introduction of Sinhalese in the law courts. This 'satyagraha' campaign organized by the Federal Party is considered to be largest anti-government demonstration ever to be staged in the country. The Federal Party issued its own postage stamps and inaugurated a postal service in the Tamil areas as a sign of defiance against government oppression and discrimination.

The government declared a "State of Emergency" and sent the military to break up the demonstration with brutal force. The Tamil leaders were arrested and imprisoned under the same draconian law. Simultaneously, Sinhalese hooligans started a "tar-brush" campaign, in which they applied tar and obliterated all the Tamil names and Tamil letters appearing on the sign boards of public

offices and private establishments. At this point, the Tamil leaders realized that non-violent democratic demonstrations will have no effect on the government, and started exploring alternative methods to regain their rights and freedom.

By 1965, the economic policies of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party had failed and the economy of the country was in shambles. There was an acute shortage of essential food items, and the people were crying out for change. At this time, the Federal Party got an opportunity to make contact with the other major political party in the country – The United National Party. The Federal Party explained the problems facing the Tamils to the leaders of the United National Party, and suggested ways and means to bring about an amicable settlement. As usual, the United National Party promised to grant all legitimate rights to the Tamils if they come to power.

In the elections that were held in 1965, neither the **Sri Lanka Freedom Party** nor the **United National Party** received an absolute majority. The support of the Federal party and the Tamil Congress became the deciding factor as to which party would form the government. Both the mainstream political parties solicited the support of the Federal Party with the promise that the rights of the Tamils would be granted if the Federal Party support them to form the government. The Tamil political parties decided to support the United National party.

With the support of the Tamil Congress and the Federal Party, the United National Party formed the government, and invited Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam to accept a cabinet post. As he did not want to accept any cabinet post till the problems of the Tamils were solved,

Mr. Chelvanayakam asked Mr. Thiruchelvam to become a member of the cabinet. Mr. Thiruchelvam, who was a Senator at that time, was appointed Minister of Local Government in the United National Party government. Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam was appointed leader of the Sri Lankan delegation to the United Nations.

In the meantime, an agreement was signed between Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake and Mr. Chelvanayakam regarding the granting of rights to the Tamil people. This came to be known as the **Dudley-Chelva Pact**. In that pact, the Federal Party agreed to accept District Councils in place of Regional Councils. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party, which was now in the opposition, and other Sinhalese leftist parties vehemently opposed and criticized the Dudley-Chelva Pact in their joint May Day meeting held in 1965. They declared January 8, 1966, “a day of mourning” and conducted a protest march in Colombo, shouting anti-Tamil slogans. Many Sinhalese organizations, including that of the Buddhist clergy, also had similar protest demonstrations against the “granting of concessions to the Tamils.”

These demonstrations provided Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake with an excuse to abrogate the pact he signed with Mr. Chelvanayakam. Tamils were deprived of even the proposed District Councils, which were in fact glorified local government bodies with no political decision-making powers. This was the second time the Sri Lankan government had abrogated pacts signed with the Federal Party. On the earlier occasion, it was the SLFP government, and this time it was the UNP government. Having found through repeated and bitter experiences that even expecting minor concessions, not to mention legitimate rights, from the Sinhalese governments would

bring only further disappointments, the Tamil people placed their faith in self-determination as the only way to free themselves from Sinhalese domination and discrimination.

During this period, the areas surrounding all the Buddhist temples, dagobas and vihares were declared "Sacred Sites" by the government. In some cases, even entire towns were declared sacred. But, when the Federal Party submitted a request to declare the ancient Hindu temple of Thirukoneswaram in Trincomalee also a sacred site, Dudley Senanayake callously rejected that request. Faced with such disappointments one after the other, the Federal Party decided to withdraw their support to the United National Party. This resulted in Mr. Thiruchelvam resigning from the cabinet, and the Federal Party members of parliament in the House crossing over from the government side to the opposition benches.

Broken promises, abrogation of signed agreements and pacts, and repeated anti-Tamil riots and pogroms, during the regimes of both the SLFP and the UNP, the only political parties capable of forming governments in Sri Lanka, served to confirm the reality of the situation: that it would be impossible for the Tamils and Sinhalese to live together. The realization that the Tamil politicians were treated only as pawns in their political game by both the mainstream political parties, forced the Tamil people to think about regaining possession of their lost kingdom.

Just prior to the 1970 general elections, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Samasamaja Party, and the Communist party formed a United Front to fight the forthcoming elections. All these three parties seemed to be

in agreement on the issue of implementing the "Sinhala only" policy and making "Buddhism, the State Religion." Nothing was mentioned about solving the "Tamil problems," as it came to be popularly referred to, in the election manifesto of the United Front. But a promise was made to draft a new constitution for the country that would be acceptable to the entire population. They asked the people for the mandate to put an end to British domination and make the country a republic. This election, they said, would be treated as a referendum to implement the promises that appeared in their election manifesto.

The election was held on May 27, 1970, and out of a total of 4,949,767 votes polled, only 2,415,302 people voted for the United Front and their republican constitution. The total number of votes polled by the United National Party, Federal Party, and others who opposed the proposals of the United Front was 2,534,314. These figures show that, although the United Front won 116 seats out of the 157 seats in the parliament, it was not a referendum victory at all, as more than half the number of voters had opposed the proposals for the republican constitution put forward by the United Front.

Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike made the official announcement on June 19, 1970, that the country would soon be declared a republic in a ceremony organized for that purpose at the Navarangahala Auditorium in Colombo. All the Tamil members of parliament boycotted that meeting. The motion to have the country declared a republic was submitted in parliament by the Prime Minister Srimavo Bandaranaike on March 15, 1971. After the usual debates, the bill was passed in the House on May 22, 1972.

This brought to an end the Soulbury Constitution under which the country was governed up to that time, and the name of the country was changed from "Ceylon" to "Sri Lanka." On that day, the official name of the country became "**The Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.**" Mr. William Gopallawa, who was the Governor General of the country under the Soulbury Constitution at that time, became the first President of the republic. The life of parliament, that was restricted to five years by the constitution, was also extended and counted from May 22, 1972 (the day the country was declared a republic), and not from May 27, 1970, the day of the previous election.

The voting age in this election was reduced from twenty-one to eighteen. The vast majority of these newly qualified voters were the young graduates from the rural areas; and they all supported the United Front with high expectations of decent employment for them and economic development for the country. That did not happen and, on the contrary, the economic situation worsened and unemployment increased. These disappointed youths, both boys as well as girls, formed a revolutionary organization called Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (Peoples' Liberation Front).

This Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna launched an armed insurrection in the country in April 1971, to overthrow the government by force of arms. They attacked and overran many police stations, and also brought many areas of the country under their control. Because of it, this organization earned the name, "Che Guevera Movement," derived from the name of the famous revolutionary Cuban freedom fighter and guerilla leader. Their success was only short lived. The government was able to put down this insurgency with the help of foreign governments. The

Indian Air Force played a major role in putting an end to this insurrection.

None of the constitutional reforms mentioned earlier brought any redress to the Tamils. They continued to be discriminated against in every field and in every sphere of their lives. The Tamils were highly educated. Many of them became very successful professionals as doctors, engineers and lawyers. The many educational institutions established by various Christian missions helped them in obtaining their education in the English language, and their proficiency in the English language provided them with opportunities to work in any part of the country.

The Tamil community as a whole gave priority to higher education over all other aspects in life, and used it as a means to better their lives. Having found the Tamils leading in many professional fields, the Sinhalese governments introduced a system of standardization for admission to Universities; according to which Tamil students had to score a higher aggregate than the Sinhalese students to gain admission. In addition, a regional ratio for admission was also introduced to further limit the number of Tamil students entering universities. The Tamil students who were very badly affected by this system of standardization and regionalization for university admissions formed "Tamil Students' Organization" to fight this injustice. This organization was later expanded to include the entire youth community and took the name, "Youth Organization."

Forced by the circumstances, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam, Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, and Mr. S. Thondaman, who were leading different political parties up

to that time, met together in a convention at Trincomalee in 1972, and formed the "Tamil United Front." To demonstrate their opposition to the proposed new constitution that was in the process of being drafted by the government, Mr. Chelvanayakam resigned his seat in the Constituent Assembly on October 3, 1972. The government did not bother to fill this vacancy for three long years, and a bi-election was held only in January 1975. Mr. Chelvanayakam contested the seat on the election platform of "separation as the only way for the Tamils," and won with a huge majority.

In their party convention held at Vaddukoddai in 1976, the Tamil United Front passed a resolution to fight for an independent motherland. This resolution came to be popularly known as the "Vaddukoddai Declaration." A traditional homeland of the Tamils, Eelam Tamil people as a nation, and a sovereign government for the Eelam people were three important aspects that were stressed in that declaration. Their goal was to establish an independent country of Eelam through the universally accepted principles of self-determination, and that country would cover the North and Eastern Provinces and the Puttalam District. According to that resolution, not only the people living in those areas but also all Tamil people living in other parts of Ceylon and elsewhere in the world would be considered as citizens of Eelam. The name of the organization was also changed from Tamil United Front to Tamil United Liberation Front in that convention.

The economy of the country started sliding down during the Srimavo Bandaranaike government, mainly through mismanagement. As a result, corruption became rampant, unemployment rose to dizzy heights, and there was terrible scarcity of all essential food items in the

country. To prevent anti-government demonstrations and food riots by the suffering masses, Srimavo declared a State of Emergency and ruled the country under this draconian law for the last five years of her term. People just waited for their chance.

When elections were finally called in 1977, the people were ready, and so was the opposition United National Party. The veteran politician, Mr. J. R. Jayawardena, who had become the leader of the United National Party by that time, presented a very attractive election manifesto to the people in which he promised safeguards for all the fundamental rights of the people, protection for all arts and culture, and development of the economy. He also promised that the Buddhist religion would be given its rightful place in the country without prejudice to other religions. It was also mentioned in his manifesto that the grievances of the Tamils were genuine, and that their agitation for separation was caused by the failure on the part of previous governments to find a just and fair solution to their problems.

A vast majority of Tamil people fell for the promises he made in his election manifesto that he would solve all the problems of the Tamil people regarding colonization, education, language rights and employment prospects. Some people, including some politicians, who analyzed that election manifesto taking into consideration Jayawardena's past political performances and behaviour, had grave doubts about his promises as nothing was mentioned about recognizing the Tamil people as a National Race.

The Tamil United Liberation Front entered the election arena with the slogan that they were taking part in

the elections only to show the majority Sinhalese governments that the Tamils still wanted a separate state of their own. Tamil people welcomed this approach thinking that it would be a first step towards their goal of achieving an independent state of their own. Following the deaths of Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam, Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam and Mr. Thiruchelvam in 1977, Mr. A. Amirthalingam became the leader of the TULF.

In the 1977 elections, the United National Party won 139 seats and formed the government. The Tamil United Liberation Front came second with 18 seats, and its leader, Mr. A. Amirthalingam, became the Leader of the Opposition. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party got only eight seats.

The Tamil United Liberation Front after becoming the main opposition party in the parliament, conveniently forgot the separate state and accepted the District Councils offered by Mr. J. R. Jayawardena. With that, Jayawardena threw all the election promises he gave to the Tamils to the wind.

A new constitution was drafted by the Jayawardena government in 1978 introducing Executive Presidency and changing the name of the country to **Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**. In the new constitution that was introduced on February 4, 1978, provisions were made for Jayawardena to serve as the Executive President for six years from that date, and the country to be divided into 24 administrative districts under a unitary form of government. The Executive President was also given the power to appoint the cabinet and dissolve parliament.

Mentions were also made to provide government support to the Buddhist religion, and Sinhala language to continue as the official language of the country whilst administration would be carried out in the Northern and Eastern Provinces in the Tamil language. Non-implementation of the election promises made the Tamil masses to rethink their future and the whole political situation.

They found the political intellectuals of the Tamil United Liberation Front would never solve any of their problems. Nor the strong capitalist government of the day would be willing to solve their problems. This drove them to the conclusion that even though political power keeps swinging to and fro between the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party at regular intervals, none of their grievances would be redressed by either of them, as both were communal minded anti-Tamil political parties. Realizing that neither electing members to local government bodies under the unitary government set-up nor sending representatives to parliament, would never solve their problems, the Tamil people extended their support wholeheartedly to the Tamil youths who had by then taken up arms to fight for their legitimate rights and freedom.

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The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam takes up Arms

The life of independent Ceylon was approaching the half-century mark. In the country that had freed itself from the shackles of British colonial rule, the indigenous Tamil population was being alienated in their own country and its birthright taken away. The major Sinhalese political parties – the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party – that had been governing the country from the time of independence in 1948 were not only not interested in solving the problems of the Tamil people but were, in fact, actively engaged in destroying the Tamil identity altogether.

In the multiracial country of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, the Sinhalese emblem of the sword-bearing lion was selected for the national flag without any consideration for the other two races. This was just the first of the long list of discriminatory actions taken against the minority races by each and every Sinhalese-dominated government that came to power in the country since independence.

The first Prime Minister of independent Sri Lanka deprived the voting rights to the so-called Indian Tamils who had lived in the country for many generations. With the introduction of the Indian and Pakistani Citizenship Act in 1949, more than a million upcountry Tamils lost their citizenship and their right to vote. This was the second one.

According to International Law every individual has the right to follow their own religion and develop their own

language, which are considered fundamental and natural rights of mankind. But, the Tamil language was deprived of its rightful place in the country with the introduction of the Official Language Act in 1956 by the then Prime Minister, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, making Sinhala the only official language in the country. Proficiency in Sinhala language was made compulsory for confirmation of appointments to the Tamil new entrants to the government service, and a requirement for further promotions for the Tamil officers who were already in the service. There were no such conditions for the Sinhalese to learn Tamil. The purpose of this legislation was to harass and humiliate the Tamil people and, at the same time, limit the number of Tamils entering government service.

A system called “standardization” was introduced in the field of higher education. In that, Tamil students had to score higher grades than the Sinhalese students to be considered for admission to the universities. In addition, regional quotas were introduced, which further restricted the number of Tamil students entering universities.

The Sinhalese governments engaged in well-planned and systematic settlement of Tamil areas with Sinhalese colonists, providing them with financial assistance and all sorts of subsidies. This government-sponsored colonization of Tamil areas with Sinhalese people completely changed the demography of many traditional Tamil electorates (ridings). This further increased the number of Sinhalese representatives elected to parliament.

The Banda-Chelva Pact signed in 1957 (between the then Sri Lanka Freedom Party Prime Minister Mr. S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike and the Federal Party leader Mr.

S.J.V.Chelvanayakam granting just a few of the basic demands of the Tamils, could not be implemented and had to be abrogated by the government in 1958, just because the Buddhist clergy and Sinhalese extremist organizations and groups opposed it. This was followed by a terrible anti-Tamil riot in which Sinhalese hooligans went on a rampage looting and burning houses and business establishments belonging to the Tamils. Countless innocent Tamils, including women and children, were simply massacred and more than 12,000 of them were made refugees in their own country of birth.

In 1961, the Sinhalese extremist elements started, what they called, the "Tar Brush Campaign." In that, they went on a spree of obliterating with tar all the Tamil words and names appearing in public places, business name-boards and, even, in government departments and offices.

The Dudley-Chelva Pact signed in 1965 (between the United National Party Prime Minister of that time, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, and the leader of the Tamil United Front, Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam) was also abandoned by the government because of the opposition from Buddhist priests and Sinhalese extremists.

Anti-Tamil riots flared up in Ceylon not once or twice but several times. The major ones were in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1977, 1981, and the worst conflagration was in 1983. The Sinhalese governments did not attempt to stop them. In fact, several leading government party members had been seen instigating and leading the pogroms. The only action governments took every time was to send the surviving Tamils by ship to the Tamil areas in the northern and eastern parts of the country, thus openly admitting that

the northern and eastern parts of the country belonged to the Tamils where they could live in safety.

The reality that no government would go against the wishes of the Buddhist clergy to grant even the most basic of the fundamental rights and privileges to the Tamil people became apparent to the Tamil youths. Experience showed them that talks with the government served no useful purpose. They found that even the concrete agreements signed were of no value, and that they were not even worth the paper on which they were written. Loss of their traditional Tamil lands to Sinhalese colonization, discrimination in education and employment, and all the losses and suffering due to insecurity, were all bitter experiences for them. All traces of regional autonomy that existed in the Tamil areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces were also removed with the introduction of District Councils under the republican constitution of the so-called "Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka." The use of brutal military force by the government on every occasion to break their non-violent democratic protests and demonstrations indicated to them very clearly and conclusively that democracy had failed them.

This realization led to a handful of Tamil youths joining hands in 1972 and forming an organization, with Velupillai Prabhakaran as its leader, and naming that organization, "New Tamil Tigers." In 1975, they declared that their fight was not against neocolonialism but for their right of self-determination against a foreign occupying force. In 1976, the name of this organization was changed to "**Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam**," to reflect their lofty ideal of liberating their traditional homeland from alien occupation.

The Tamil political parties contested the 1977 seeking a mandate from the Tamil people to re-establish Tamil Eelam through democratic means. In their election manifesto, they informed the people that if they were elected, they would function as a constituent assembly, draft a constitution, and declare independence unitarily. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam informed the Tamil as well as the Sinhalese people that if they cannot reach their goal by democratic means, they would win it through the use of arms.

Even though Tamil parties received the required mandate from the Tamil people in the 1977 elections, the government not only refused to recognize it but also introduced legislation called the Anti Terrorism Act and started destroying the Tamil people. In the 1983 anti-Tamil riots instigated by the government, thousands of homes and business establishments belonging to the Tamils in and around Colombo were looted and burnt, thus completely destroying the economy of the Tamil people. Many thousands of Tamils were massacred or maimed, and the rest were made refugees. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Tamils fled their country of birth and took refuge in neighbouring and other far away foreign countries.

When the plight of the Tamil people and the atrocities committed to them became known to the outside world, foreign countries started pressing the Sri Lankan government to solve the problem. As a result, President Jayawardena convened an All-Party Conference. The Tamil United Liberation Front, which took part in the discussions, recommended establishment of Regional Councils and to grant administrative powers to the Chief Ministers who would head those councils. The Buddhist

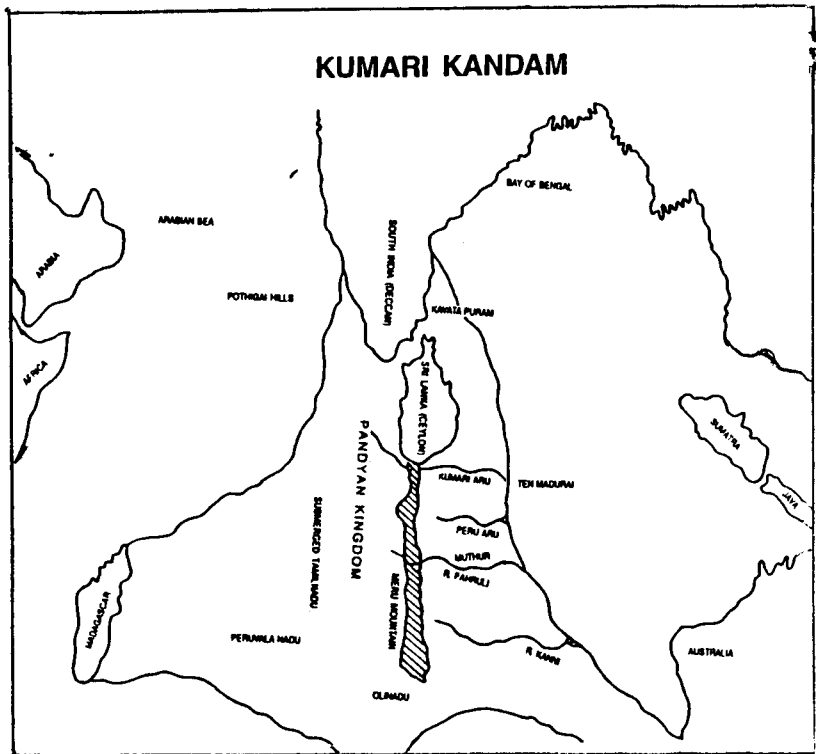
clergy, accusing it as a scheme to divide the country vehemently opposed this.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, honouring the promise they gave to the Tamil people on July 21, 1977, took up arms. What was started as a guerilla movement, has now bloomed into a conventional armed force with its own infantry and artillery units, navy, and airforce. Whilst engaged in a civil war at home, they are also actively engaged in bringing the Tamil problem to the attention of the world.

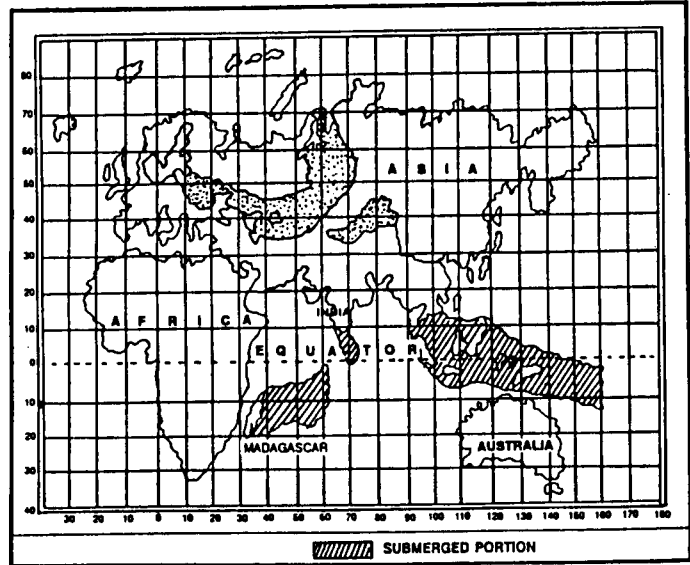
The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam enjoys tremendous support from the entire Tamil population – young and old, men and women. The support for this organization is now worldwide. “There is no other guerilla movement in the world to match the popular support enjoyed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. This makes it all the more necessary to find a political solution to the racial problem,” said the Colombo University Professor Jayantha Seneviratne, who is a Sinhalese.

Because of pressures from foreign governments, the Sri Lankan government was pushed to find a solution to the Tamil problem, and initiated talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 1995. The talks failed, as the government did not present any concrete proposals towards finding a permanent solution. The bitter experiences of failed talks, abrogation of pacts by both successive governments, and the inability or unwillingness on the part of both the UNP and the SLFP governments to submit any worthwhile proposals during their talks, made the Tamil people to throw their weight behind the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, under the leadership of **Velupillai Prabhakaran**, which has now become a full blown peoples’ movement. With the entire Tamil nation behind them, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are now engaged in an armed struggle with increased enthusiasm to liberate the Tamil homeland and regain all the lost rights.

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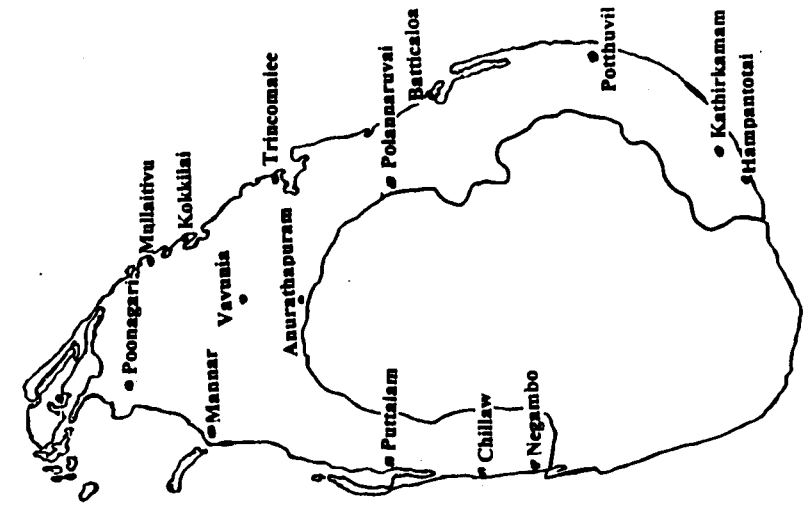


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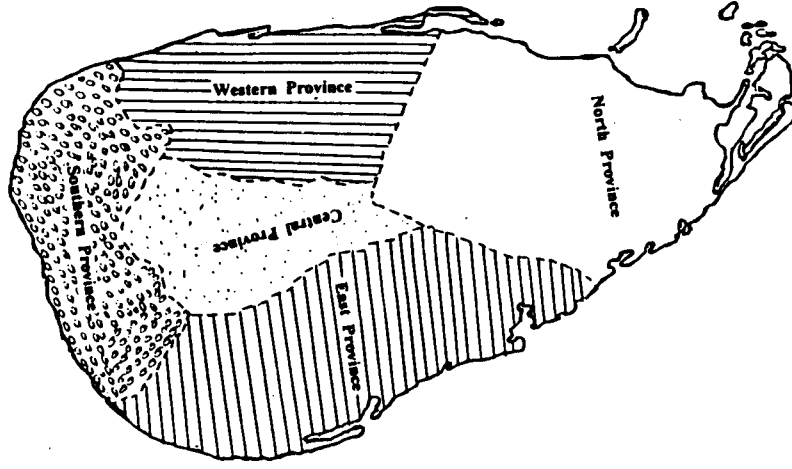


Ceylon during the Dutch Rule

Tamil settlements at the time of the arrival of Europeans to Ceylon (1505 AD)



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