

= Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism =

Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism is the conviction of the Sri Lankan Tamil people , a minority ethnic group in the South Asian island country of Sri Lanka ( formerly known as Ceylon ) , that they have the right to constitute an independent or autonomous political community . This idea has not always existed . Sri Lankan Tamil national awareness began during the era of British rule during the nineteenth century , as Tamil Hindu revivalists tried to counter Protestant missionary activity . The revivalists , led by Arumuga Navalar , used literacy as a tool to spread Hinduism and its principles .

The reformed legislative council , introduced in 1921 by the British , was based on principles of communal representation , which led the Tamils to realize that they were the minority ethnic group and that they should be represented by a member of their own community . It was under this communal representation that Tamil national awareness changed to national consciousness ? a less passive state . They formed a Tamil political party called the All Ceylon Tamil Congress ( ACTC ) . In the years leading to Sri Lankan independence , political tension began to develop between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil communities as the ACTC , citing the possibility of the majority Sinhalese adopting a dominant posture , pushed for ? fifty @-@ fifty ? representation in parliament . This policy would allot half the seats in parliament to the Sinhalese majority and half to the minority communities : the Muslims , the Tamils and the Indian Tamils .

After Sri Lanka achieved independence in 1948 , the ACTC decided to merge with the ruling United National Party ( UNP ) . This move was not supported by half of the ACTC members and resulted in a split ? one half of the party decided to merge with the UNP and the other half decided to leave the party altogether , forming a new Tamil party in 1949 , the Federal party . Policies adopted by successive Sinhalese governments , and the 1956 success of the Sinhala Nationalist government under Solomon Bandaranaike , made the Federal Party the main voice of Tamil politics . Increased racial and political tension between the two communities led to the merger of all Tamil political parties into the Tamil United Liberation Front . This was followed by the emergence of a militant , armed form of Tamil nationalism .

= = Before Independence = =

= = = Early beginning = = =

The arrival of Protestant missionaries on a large scale to Sri Lanka ( then called Ceylon ) , beginning in 1814 , was a primary contributor to the development of political awareness among Tamils . The activities of missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions , Methodists and Anglican churches led to a revival among Tamils of the Hindu faith . Arumuga Navalar led a Hindu religious revivalist and reformist movement as a defensive response to the threat to their native culture posed by the British colonial and missionary activities . He translated literary works to encourage the use of the Tamil Language and spread Hindu Saiva principles . Navalar ? s efforts to revive Hinduism , the predominant religion of the Sri Lankan Tamil people , influenced Tamils who built their own schools , temples , and societies , and who published literature to counter that of the missionaries . Thus , by 1925 nearly 50 schools , including the Batticotta Seminary , were fully functioning . This revival movement also set the stage for modern Tamil prose .

The success of this effort led the Tamils to think confidently of themselves as a community and prepared the way for their awareness of a common cultural , religious and linguistic kinship in the mid @-@ nineteenth century . For these contributions to the Tamil people , Arumugam Navalar has been described as a leader who gave his community a distinct identity .

= = = Communal Consciousness = = =

Great Britain controlled the whole island by 1815 , and unified the country administratively in 1833

with a legislative council that acted as advisor to the Governor . The council was composed of three Europeans and one representative each of the Sinhalese , the Sri Lankan Tamils , and the Burghers . But this situation changed in 1919 with the arrival of British Governor William Manning , who actively encouraged the idea of " communal representation " . He created the reformed legislative council in 1921 and its first election returned thirteen Sinhalese and three Tamils , a significant loss in representation for the Tamils when compared to the previous council based on direct appointment by the governor . Because of this , the Tamils began to develop a communal consciousness and to think of themselves as a minority community . They focused on communal representation in the council rather than national representation , and decided that their delegates should be leaders from their own community . This new sense of community identity changed the direction of Tamil nationalism . Starting in the mid @-@ 1920s , their developing national awareness transformed into a more active national consciousness , with a heightened determination to protect the interests of the Ceylon Tamil community . Influenced heavily by political history and , perhaps more importantly , Colombo @-@ centered developments of the British administration , this emerging Tamil national consciousness led to the establishment of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress headed by Tamil politician , G. G. Ponnambalam .

= = = Development = = =

Historic changes occurred in 1931 : the reformed legislative council was eliminated , and the Donoughmore Commission , which rejected communal representation , was formed . Instead , the Commission introduced universal franchise , in which representation was proportionate to percentage of population . The Tamil leadership strongly opposed this plan , realizing that they would be reduced to a minority in parliament . Many Sinhalese were also against the idea of universal franchise for all castes.G. G. Ponnambalam publicly protested the Donoughmore Commission and proposed to the Soulbury Commission , which had replaced the Donoughmore Commission , that roughly equal numbers of congressional seats be assigned to Tamils and to Sinhalese in the new independent Ceylon being planned , but his proposal was rejected . From the introduction of the advisory council , through the Donoughmore Commission in 1931 , to the Soulbury Commission in 1947 , the primary dispute between the elite of the Sinhalese and Tamils was over the question of representation , not the structure of the government . This issue of power @-@ sharing was used by the nationalists of both communities to create an escalating inter @-@ ethnic rivalry which has been gaining momentum ever since .

Ponnambalam 's advocacy of Tamil nationalism was paralleled by a similar Sinhala nationalism of Sinhala Maha Sabha , led by future Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike . This created tension between the two leaders and caused the exchange of verbal attacks , with Ponnampalam calling himself a " proud Dravidian " . This interethnic and political stress led to the first Sinhala @-@ Tamil riot in 1939 . ( see Riots and pogroms in Sri Lanka )

= = After Independence = =

= = = All Ceylon Tamil Congress = = =

The All Ceylon Tamil Congress ( ACTC ) , founded by G. G. Ponnambalam in 1944 , was popular among Tamils because it promoted the preservation of Tamil identity . The ACTC advocated a " fifty @-@ fifty " policy , in which fifty percent of the seats in parliament would be reserved for Tamils and other minorities , the remaining fifty percent going to the Sinhalese . Which means 50 % of the opportunities [ Education ( University seats ) , Employment , etc . ) should be allocated to minorities . According to the ACTC this was a necessary defensive measure to prevent unwarranted dominance by the Sinhalese . In 1947 , Ponnambalam warned the Soulbury Commission about this potential problem , and presented the ACTC 's solution , which he called a " balanced representation " . This fifty @-@ fifty policy was opposed by a Muslim minority and sections of the Tamil community . D. S.

Senanayake , the leader of the Sinhalese political groups , allowed Ponnambalam full control over presentations before the Soulbury Commission , prevented Sinhalese nationalists such as Solomon Bandaranaike from taking the stage , and avoided the eruption of acrimonious arguments . But the Soulbury commission rejected the charges of discrimination against the Tamils , and also rejected the fifty @-@ fifty formula as subverting democracy .

Later the ACTC decided to adopt a new policy : " responsive cooperation " with " progressive @-@ minded Sinhalese " . Yet in 1948 , Ponnampalam decided to merge the ACTC with the ruling United National Party ( UNP ) , although he had stated earlier that the UNP was not progressive @-@ minded . The merge was not supported by the entire party , and it ended up splitting the ACTC in half , with one faction merging with D. S. Senanayake ' s UNP and the other , led by S.J.V. Chelvanayakam , deciding to leave the party altogether and advocated for equal rights , 100 % opportunities for Tamils without any racial barrier . In 1948 , Ponnampalam voted in favour of one of several bills , later known as the Ceylon Citizenship Act which disenfranchised Indian Tamils ( " Hill Country Tamils " ) . Although he did not vote for the other bills in the Ceylon Citizenship Act , because of his silence in parliament the Tamil public believed that he was not committed to Indian Tamil rights . The ACTC remained the major Tamil political party until 1956 , when the Federal Party took over that position . The Tamil Congress still held parliamentary positions , however , and continued to be a force in Tamil politics . In 1976 , the ACTC merged with other Tamil political factions to form a new party called the Tamil United Liberation Front ( TULF ) . According to A. J Wilson , it was the legacy of Ponnampalam that the consciousness of the Tamil people was raised , and they were inspired to see themselves as a separate Tamil national identity rather as merged in an all @-@ island polity .

= = = Federal Party = = =

In 1949 , a new Tamil party , called the Federal Party ( " Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi " ) , was organized by the people who broke away from the ACTC . Led by Chelvanayakam , it gained popularity among the Tamil people because it advocated Tamil rights . Its popularity was also due to the party 's opposition to the Ceylon Citizenship Act and the Sinhala Only Act . As a result , the Federal party became the dominant party in the Tamil districts after the 1956 elections . Despite this , the Federal Party never asked for a separate Tamil state or even for self @-@ determination . Instead they lobbied for a unified state which gave Tamil and Sinhalese equal status as the official language and provided for considerable autonomy in the Tamil areas . It was against this backdrop that the Bandaranaike @-@ Chelvanayakam Pact was signed in July 1957 , but pressure from the opposition and extremist groups forced Bandaranaike to abolish the pact . After the assassination of Bandaranaike , another pact was signed in 1965 between Chelvanayakam and Dudley Senenayake called the Dudley @-@ Chelvanayakam Pact , but this agreement , like the Bandaranaike @-@ Chelvanayakam pact , was never implemented . The UNP was defeated in the 1970 election and replaced by the United Front ( UF ) , led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike , the widow of Solomon Bandaranaike .

The new government adopted two new policies that discriminated against the Tamil people . First , the government introduced a double standard for admission grades to universities , requiring the Tamil students to achieve higher grades than the Sinhalese students . Secondly , the same kind of policy was adopted for jobs as public servants , which were held by less than ten percent of the Tamil @-@ speaking population . The Federal Party opposed these policies , and as a result Chelvanayakam resigned his parliamentary seat in October 1972 . Shortly after , in 1973 , the Federal Party decided to demand a separate , autonomous Tamil state . Until 1973 , Chelvanayakam and the Federal Party had always campaigned for a unified country and thought that any partitioning would be ? suicidal ? . The new policies , however , were considered to be discriminatory by the Tamil leadership , and this modified the official position on Tamil Nationalism . To further the new political agenda , in 1975 the Federal Party merged with the other Tamil political parties to become the Tamil United Liberation Front ( TULF ) . In 1976 , after the first national convention of TULF , the Ceylon Tamils moved toward a revised nationalism and were now unwilling

to live within a confined , single @-@ island entity .

= = = Tamil United Liberation Front = = =

The Tamil United Liberation Front ( TULF ) was formed when the Tamil political parties merged and adopted the Vaddukoddai Resolution , named after the village , Vaddukoddai , where it was developed . In the 1977 election , TULF became the first Tamil Nationalist party to run on a separatist platform . It gained a majority of the votes in the north and east , won 18 seats , and became the largest opposition party in parliament . The Vaddukoddai Resolution had a profound effect on Tamil politics ? the parliamentary system was soon to be replaced by guns . TULF tried to refashion itself as the political division , negotiating an agreement with the executive president of Sri Lanka at that time , J.R. Jayewardene . This agreement , known as the District Development Councils ? Scheme , was passed in 1980 , but TULF rejected it because J.R. Jayewardene had not agreed to let TULF have the five District Ministerships in the five Tamil districts where TULF received the most votes . The Sixth Amendment was passed in 1983 , requiring Tamils in parliament and other public offices to take an oath of allegiance to the unified state of Sri Lanka . It forbade the advocating of a separate state , and consequently TULF members were expelled from parliament for refusing to take the oath .

= = = Militant groups = = =

After the expulsion of TULF from parliament , militants ruled the Tamil political movement . As a result , the 1970s saw the emergence of more than 30 Tamil militant groups . Anton Balasingham , the theoretician of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ( LTTE ) , states that the causes of the militarization of the Tamil youth were unemployment , lack of opportunities for higher education , and the imposition of an alien language . He further alleges that the majority Sinhalese government was responsible for these problems , adding that the only alternative left for Tamil youths was a " revolutionary armed struggle for the independence of their nation " . Only five of the militant groups ? People 's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam ( PLOTE ) , Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization ( TELO ) , Eelam People 's Revolutionary Liberation Front ( EPRLF ) , Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students ( EROS ) and LTTE ? remained a potent political force ; the rest were flawed ideologically and therefore not strictly Tamil Nationalist factions .

Of these five dominant groups , the LTTE is the most solidly nationalistic Tamil resistance organization . Furthermore , because of its policies , constructive Tamil Nationalist platform , and desire for national self @-@ determination , the LTTE is supported by major sections of the Tamil community . It had established a de facto state in the areas under its control , called Tamil Eelam , and had managed a government in these areas , providing state functions such as courts , a police force , a human rights organization , and a humanitarian assistance board. a health board , and an education board . In addition , it ran a bank ( Bank of Tamil Eelam ) , a radio station ( Voice of Tigers ) and a television station ( National Television of Tamil Eelam ) .