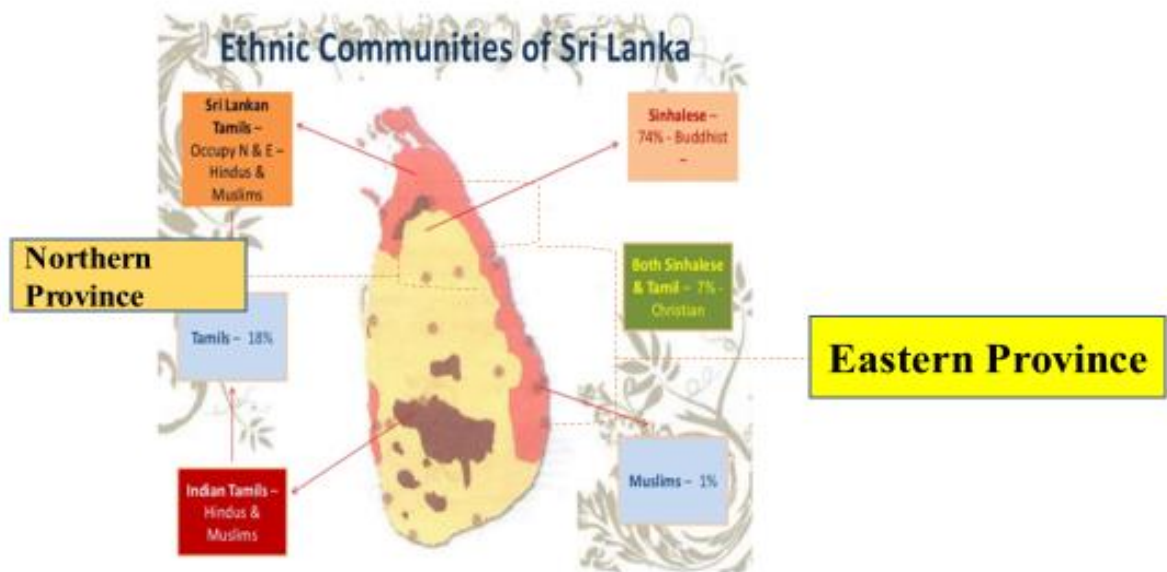


## Chapter II

# Ethnicity and the Process of Nation Building in Sri Lanka since Independence

Map-1: Ethnic Communities of Sri Lanka



## Chapter II

# Ethnicity and the Process of Nation Building in Sri Lanka since Independence

### Introduction

The Sri Lanka, independent state, had been a motherland of several cultural-values, languages and ethnic traditions. It had as well been considered as an equatorial land. The plants of the maritime girdle had been lush and histrionic and the hilly parts of the inland remained remarkable. According to the census report 1981, the Sri Lanka's ethnic structure had been about 74 percent Sinhalese, majority of whom were Buddhists; 18 percent Tamils, who remained Hindus, 7 percent Muslims and the remainder belongs to other minor religious groups. Strategies devised by the political leaders of the Sinhalese in the post-colonial Sri Lanka, previously recognized as Ceylon, had been mostly ethno-centric and were in favour of Sinhalese (Sri Lanka Census...). This particular notion stands confirmed by Asoka Bandarage's concept of language. According to him, the Tamil people expected that plans for instance the Citizenship Act of 1948 and the *Sinhala* only One Official Language as an act of 1956 articulated by the Sinhalese political leaders would dilute the contemporary unitary state building efficiently neglecting the requirements of their community of interests. (Bandarage, 2009: 43)

The Sinhalese influential leaders, who ruled the island in the post-independence period, remained conscious of the Sinhalese willpower for the unified state; consequently, they did not intend to revamp the political structure of the British rule. Instead, they took an early initiative to consolidate the unitary nation building. In this regard, Murugan Gunasingam's contents in his book '*Tamil Eelam Liberation Struggle State Terrorism and Ethnic Cleaning 1948 – 2009*' (2012)

bears relevance here. According to him, at the initial stage (1948-1956) of the amalgamation of a unitary state building after independence, Newton Gunasinghe, a renowned writer, stated (Gunasinghe, 1984: 56):

*“Sri Lanka was governed by a social stratum representing landed and commercial interests. This elite was economically and socially a product of British colonialism...although competition ... and rivalry took place within the ruling elite on the basis of these parochial loyalties, the political pressure from the people kept them sufficiently united”.*

But, the year 1956 brought about an important modification. The leaders fought within the United National Party (UNP) which governed the state from 1948 to 1956, was a noteworthy affair.

The Ethno-nationalism has been another formula of societal organisation and recognition to social stratifications, but it was a conditional and unsettled status that like class, may or may not be described in specific contexts or at specific time. According to Paul R. Brass, ethno-national clusters that use the affection of the traditions to make requirements in the political-system for establishing alternative choice in their position, in their economic welfare, and in their civil-political rights, or in their academical prospects were involved in a form of group political interests which turned spectacular in the United States throughout the 1960s and 1970s and which aimed at the improvement of group fellow member as people (Brass, 1991: 19). Consequently, in some other contexts, some ethno-national groups moved forward to claim the collective rights which should be recognised to the assemblage as a whole so that they remained not only exactly individual educational prospects and possibilities on the same way like others but should be empowered to regulate the state-supported academic organization in their regions. In this context, they could teach and explain the history, linguistic lesson and cultural aspects of their own assemblage to their own toddlers. Later on, the ethno-national groups

desire the national position or positions and sought for the acknowledgement of the nation. Consequently, a nation might be considered as an exact form of ethnic group or, rather, as an ethno-national community politically mobilised, with recognized grouping civil rights in the structure of political framework.

### **Concept of Nation Building**

The Nation-building can be defined as a continuous procedure grounded on the rules/grounds of political norms and values. The *Nation-building* and *State-building* have been intimately correlated to each other, although some essential variance between them occurred at the hypothetical degree. The Nation-building had been defined as a procedure through which the society of community of a particularized group, tribesman, and village transmutes its principles, value orientation and obligation from minor to the greater political structure based on the principles and moralities of aggregate nationality, collective symbolizations and cultural agreement, the celebration of individual identities and individualities (Mylonas, 2017). Therefore, the nation can be formed by the conversion of an ethnic group in a multi-ethnic state into conscious political being or by the consolidation of various groups and the development of an inter-ethnic persons, or amalgamated with homogeneous ethno-cultural values through the authority of the contemporary state. In this connection, Paul R. Brass intimated that the procedure of nationality formation might or might not be followed at the stage where political system had been created consistent with the nationality by forming a sovereign or sovereign self-governing organisation (Brass, 19). In the same way, the procedure of nation-building by state administrative body might or might not succeed in forming a fairly relative self-coloured/homogeneous ethnic groups consistent with the state's territorial boundaries. As many ethnic groups face conflicts in multi-ethnic societies, they often have to live together.

Nation-building always endorses legitimate validity of the greater political structure. Although broadly used, the word nation-building is regarded as indefinite, vague and somewhat controversial. There has been also a growing tendency to render the name *nation-building* alternatively with the state-building (Alesina & Reich 2015). The State-building had been understood as the task of forming the operational-states capable of accomplishing the basic requirements and necessary dimensions of contemporary statehood. On the other hand, Nation-building denotes an abstract procedure which brings forth a collective sensation of unique identity or community among the several groups comprising the population of a specific state (Berger & Weber, 2006: 201).

Thus, in particular, the state-building focuses on the effective functions of establishing or strengthening the national or state institutions and organisations, while nation-building remains more important characteristics of cooperative relations among citizens, society and state. The *State-building* has extensively been an emphasis on the broad international development support for strengthening the capacity-building agendas. Nation-building, then again, is often considered as a more intensive procedure with a restricted affair for external support (Porta, 1995: 4). Alternatively, the state building has been described as a process by which the state setups can be established and formed for the domination & control and legitimate exercise of power in its particular territorial particular boundary or boundaries based on the principles of rule of law and law-enforcement. Therefore, the concept of Nation building and State building appears to be different but they have been in some manner related.

The nation-building stands excessively relevant at this point as the politics of inequity and discrimination, demand of sovereignty and the identity of the leading influential groups mobilise the certain ethnic conflicts in national setting. Therefore, nation-building could be considered as safeguard instrument to anticipate the authoritative domination and supremacy

of the centre. In this regard, Partha Chatterjee's illuminating observation in his book '*The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*', seems to be pertinent here. Partha Chatterjee argued that there had been a necessity to cry for ethnic groups to integrate themselves positively in the framework of the nation (Chatterjee, 1991: 11). According to him, the whole part of the relationship between the ethno-national group and the government wants a heedful and systematic dialogue.

There are three manners to define the ethno-national groups - in terms of (a) Objective Attributes; (b) Subjective Feelings; and (c) Relation to Behaviour. The objective definition upholds that although a particular feature is perpetually consociated with all ethno-national divisions, there should be a different cultural characteristic which is explicitly separated from one community to others, whether operational features remain dialectal-language, province, religious conviction, colour, food habits, dress-up, or any of them (Brass: 18). The problem with objective dimensions is that it has been enormously difficult to determine the boundaries of ethnic divisions. The disadvantage of subjective definition is that it is difficult to answer the initial question about how an assemblage of people in the society attains subjective self-consciousness in the beginning. Behavioural definition is the actual form of objective definition because it assumes that ethnic groups behave or do not behave in the certain concrete methods mainly in relation to and in interactive processing with other assemblages in the social sphere (Brass: 18). Behavioural definitions purely addressed that there have been cultural divergences between ethno-national communities, but the serious differences expose themselves merely in the social relations and fundamental interaction with other groups.

The method of nationality-building had been a matter in which objective differences between ethnic groups achieve gradually subjective and emblematic implication and consequence, had been transformed into an awareness or realisation, and a requirement of community solidarity

and developed the base for successive political requirements and claims. The first is the transformation from ethno-cultural group to community in the specific society. Depending on the situation, this phase might be well related such alteration like the formation of a self-reliance linguistic-group, the creation of a caste companionship from a caste group, or creation of believers' community from the supporters of a specific religious leader (Deutsch, 1966: 40). The leading organisers of the movement may form a linguistic community that they can demand the authority and supremacy of that language in a specific region or territorial boundary; the supporters of the religious-belief group of people could also attempt protection for the linguistic or writing-languages or security of script in which their spiritual manuscripts had been printed or inscribed and could promote the identity of the linguistic with the religious conviction.

In another phase of the transformation of ethno-national group, the ethnic groups involved in the articulation and fulfilment of socio-political and economic rights for the followers of the community or for the community group as a total community. Depending on group's requirements and demands, its size and allocation, its relationship with other social-assemblages and the political situation, requirements might aim at fairly self-effacing civic, educational, political privileges and prospects for the community members in society or for recognition of the assemblage's conjoin presence as a political form or ethno-national organisation. According to Paul R Brass, the explanation of the way of nationality building in this way advocated various problems that needs to be explained (Brass: 22): First, under which conditions ethnic groups are transmuted into communities as a whole and under which circumstances ethnic demands, and ethnic rivalry triggered conflict? Second, what were the situations under which an ethnic group had been likely to put forth the major demand for their social position as a national group and what were the necessities for their victory? Third, how did the ethnic groups transform their demand of culture, behaviour, and boundaries into

nationality movement? The ethnicity and nationalism are not gifted, but are social and political constructs.

In this circumstance, the ethnic politics can marginalize and restrict another ethnic group (s) owing to their differences and thus, this alignment can ruin the belief of the downgraded in the state and its organizations. There had been nine provinces in the archipelago of Sri Lanka; Northern Area, North Central Area, North Western Province, Central domain, Eastern Jurisdiction, Western Province, Sabra Gamuwa Area, Uva Province, and Southern Sphere. Each province has its own separate customs, culture, behaviours, and norms. There have been four foremost religions; Buddhist belief, Christian religion, Hindu religion and Islamism in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Sri Lankan society has to be considered as multi-religious, multi-cultural and complex society. Since the independence of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese political leaders articulated the strategies and strategies of Sinhalese political symbol for strengthening the unitary state system. The Sinhalese understood such rules and activities were formed to get-up their demands and requirements (Imtiyaz: 131). In fact, the Donoughmore Constitution (1931–1947) with its executive committee structure had allowed for the limited formal inspiration to establish the political system in Sri Lanka (Silva, 1997: 242). However, there were six political parties in Sri Lanka by 1946. The constitutional modifications in 1947 did not recompense the consideration to bring out the federal system of state building, rather they revised the unitary state system (Imtiyaz: 133). Consequently, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it might be claimed that this was a main cause source of the enormous political glitches in Sri Lanka.

### **Ethnic Demography in Sri Lanka**

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a semi-presidential structure which recorded 3000 years of extensive historical spans. It has been a diversity of traditions and values like religious conviction, customs, opinions, values and cultural attitudes. These distinct ideologies



were regarded as sovereign and independent located in its own self and cultural varieties leading to the national identity.

Sinhalese, the utmost significant ethno-national group in the island, was the majority in number. As per census report of 1981, the Sinhala ethno-national groups were about 74 percent (Census of Population and Housing...1981). In 500 B.C.E, they were traditionally migrated from northern India. They were Indo-Aryan ethnic groups who mixed with the original residents of Sri Lanka's proto-Australoid (Silva: 1997). The Sinhala distinctiveness is based on two issues: (a) Language, (b) Religion particularly Buddhism. Two types of Sinhalese are found in Sri Lanka; a) Low country Sinhalese<sup>1</sup> b) Kandyan Sinhalese<sup>2</sup>. Low country Sinhalese were significantly influenced by the Western cultural values and notion of modernization. But then, Kandyan Sinhalese were traditional and conventional in nature. They were attempting to preserve their conventionalism and cultural traditions (Chopra, 2000: 76). But over the years, the differences between Sinhalese and Kandian Sinhalese had been expunged due to the internal migration in the island.

The second important ethno-national assemblage is the Tamil national group. They arrived in the island throughout the British colonial rule. Tamils were mostly Hindus and Christian. The Tamil community has three sub-groups that are based on linguistic, cultural traditions and provincial conducts (Bajoria, 2009): first, the Negombo (Puttalam areas) Tamils remained in western domain of Sri Lanka, secondly, some portions of Tamils were from eastern part of Sri Lanka, and finally, Jaffna or Northern Tamils were from northern-region of Sri Lanka. The majority Tamil people are found in Northeast province of Sri Lanka.

The other Ethno-National groups were Moors, who made the third greatest ethno-national group in Sri-Lanka. They believed in the Islamic religious belief. The Portuguese called all the Islamic communities as Moors in Sri Lanka. Moors were the maximum number in the Ampara

and Trincomallee regions. They settled in the state of Sri Lanka for business and commerce between 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century. (Silva, 1997: 5). They use to speak the Tamil language and they keep up with Islam as their religion. The functional-occupations of Moors were mainly trade & business, fishing and cultivation. A number of Islamic persons like Memons, Bohras, Khojas etc. arrived from India, mainly Kerala and Tamil Nadu states. Malays came during the Portuguese and British rule for commercial intentions. Memons, Indian Muslims, arrived from the Sindh province (now Pakistan) in the 1870s. Bohra was termed as Dawoodi Bohra.

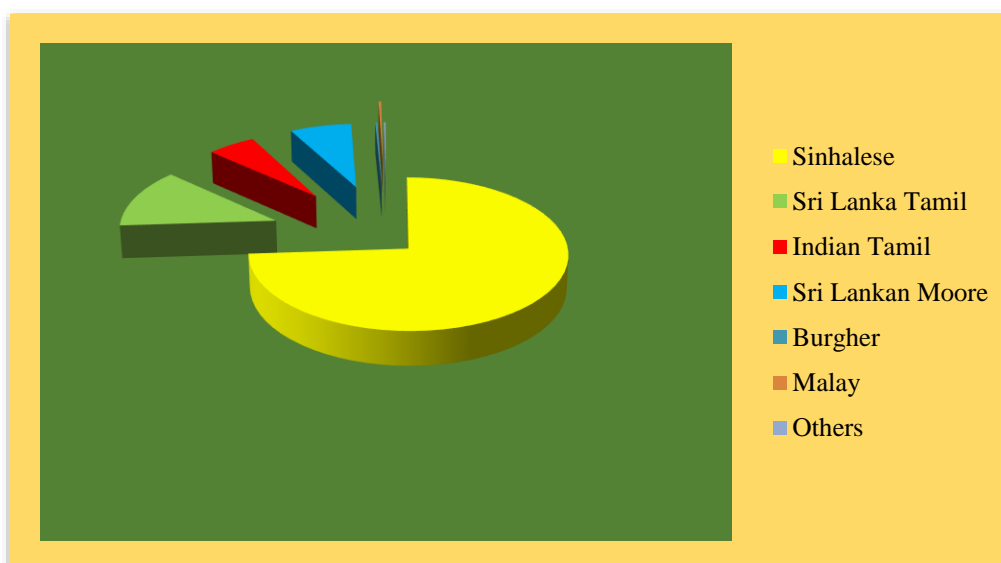
According to the census report of 2012, Muslims were the third major national group in Sri Lanka. They lived in Eastern area 5,69,182, Western field 4,50,505, Northern-western province 2,60,380, Central area 2,52,694 and 3,59,877 in different areas of the state (Chopra, 2000: 47). This apart, two other small groups need to be analysed; (a) Burghers<sup>3</sup> and (b) Vaddas<sup>4</sup>. The Burghers are the Eurasian national people in Sri Lanka. They belonged to Portuguese, Dutch and British families. They were living in the extremely sophisticated and cultured urban areas of Sri Lanka like Colombo, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Gampaha (Silva, 6). They use to speak their language in English and their homegrown linguistic dialects were Sinhala and Tamil. They were colonial assorted blood among Portuguese, Dutch, and English. Vaddas were proto-Australoid persons who were indigenous and aboriginal resident of Sri Lanka. They speak their language Sinhala and Tamil. The Tamil and Sinhala people are gradually absorbing the people of Vaddas in Sri Lanka. The hunter-collecting and agrarian functions were their activities and some Veddass who lived as long at East coastline zones, their occupation was sea-fishing. The Census Report of 1981, Census Report of 2001 and Census Report of 2012 disclosed the comparative ethno-national demographic study which embodied the proportional share of the populace in the state of Sri Lanka. Details are stated in the following table.

**Table-1: Structure of Population Profile in Sri Lanka, 1981**

Ethnic People	Number	Percentage
Sinhalese	10979561	74.0
Sri Lanka Tamil	1886872	12.7
Indian Tamil	818656	5.5
Sri Lankan Moore	1046926	7.0
Burgher	39374	0.3
Malay	46963	0.3
Others	28398	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>14846750</b>	<b>100</b>

Census of Population and Housing, 1981, General Report  
Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka  
<http://nada.statistics.gov.lk/index.php/catalog/1271/accesspolicy> [Accessed on-17/12/2017].

The graphical representation of the above table-1 is as follows:



A survey of population was conclusively the only most wide-ranging statistical assumed in the state of Sri Lanka. It correspondingly provides actual valued accounting data on demographic and other interrelated features. In the 2001, Survey report out of the 5 Districts in the Northern Areas of Sri Lanka, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Jaffna, did not properly cover throughout primary and final Survey. The population survey of Vavuniya and Mannar were partly encompassed due to the ethnic crisis (Census of Population and Housing...2001). In the Eastern Area, the population report of Ampara was completely covered and Batticaloa and Trincomalee were partly completed.

It is evidently perceived that during 1981-2001, the proportional ratio of the young population profile was reduced by 8.7 percent. In 1981, the consistent number of Sinhalese persons was 74.0 percent. But the Sinhalese inhabitant were 82.0 percent as per census report of Sri Lanka, 2001. Subsequently, there was momentous upsurge of Sinhalese persons during 1981-2001 phase. Then again, there was remarkable reduction of Tamil public in 2001 (Census of Population and Housing...2001). As per the survey report of 2001, the population density of Sri Lanka stood at 300 people per square-kilometre. There was an extensive difference in populace solidity and compactness were remaining crossways the regions. Colombo, the capital city of Sri Lanka, had been largest inhabited district with 3,330 persons per square-kilometre (Census of Population and Housing...2001).

The census report, 2001 estimated the population growth of Sri Lanka by ethno-national groups for 18 regional districts. There were 74 percent Sinhalese people, Sri Lankan Tamil people were 4.3 percent, Indian Tamil were 5.1 percent and Sri Lankan Moor<sup>5</sup> were 7.9 percent as per census report. The census report of 2001 revealed that proportion of the population for districts was not fully covered only covered. The population information collected in this regard was based on the registration of births and deaths. According to the estimation and counted population among 25 districts, the maximum population profile was stated from district Colombo and the number of populations was 2,251,274. The second largest people were in

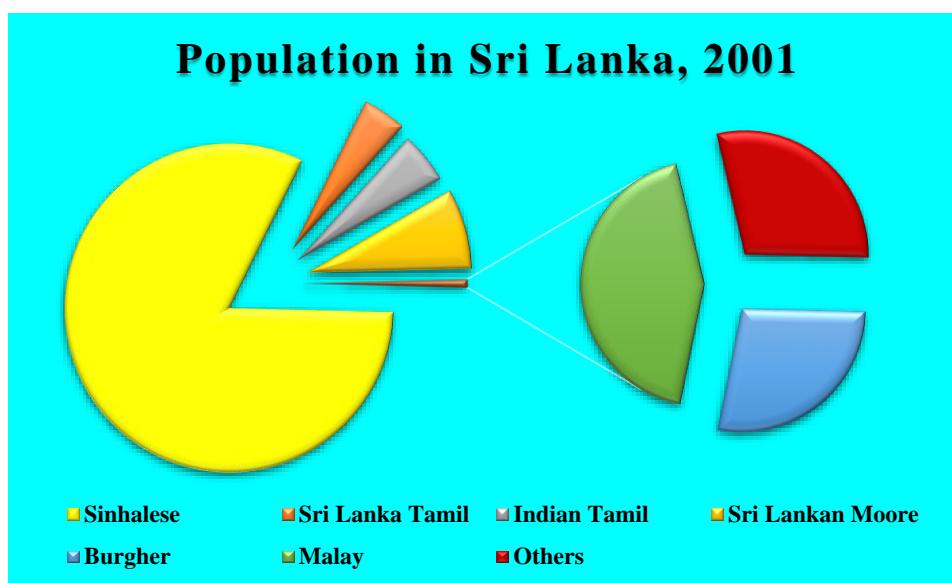
Gampaha district and the number of populations is 2,063,684 (Census of Population and Housing Censuses...2001). The census report of 2001 revealed the population of Mullaitivu district which was lowest in number. The total population of this district was 1,21,667, as per census report. As per the report of 2001, it is obviously noticed that the total population Sri Lanka was 16,929,689.

**Table-2: Population Profile in the State of Sri Lanka, 2001**

<b>Ethnic People</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sinhalese</b>	<b>13876245</b>	<b>74.</b>
<b>Sri Lanka Tamil</b>	<b>732149</b>	<b>4.3</b>
<b>Indian Tamil</b>	<b>855025</b>	<b>5.1</b>
<b>Sri Lankan Moore</b>	<b>1339331</b>	<b>7.9</b>
<b>Burgher</b>	<b>35283</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Malay</b>	<b>54782</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>36874</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,929,689</b>	

Census of Population and Housing 2001  
Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka  
<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/PDF/Population/p9p8%20Ethnicity.pdf> [Accessed on-17/12/2017].

The graphical representation of the above table-2 is as follows:



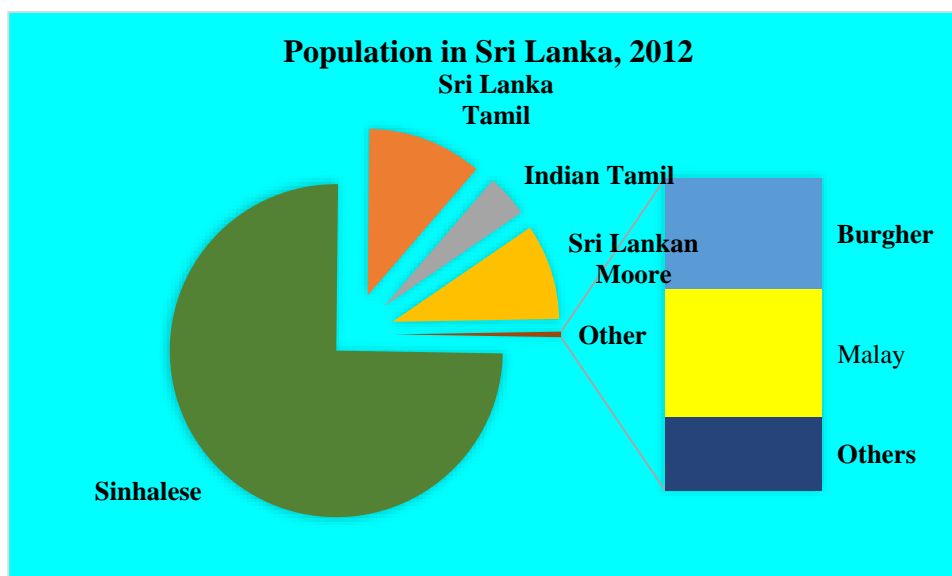
As per the census report of 2001, there were 76.7 percent people belongs to the Buddhists religion and 7.8 percent people were Hindus, 8.5 percent followed of Islam, 6.1 percent were Roman Catholics. But it was apparently observed that the census report of 2012 estimated the populace of Sri Lanka by ethno-national assemblages. There were Sinhalese people were 74.90 percent, Sri Lankan Tamil people were 11.15 percent, Indian origin Tamil were 4.15 percent and Sri Lanka Moor were 9.29 percent as per census report.

**Table-3: Structure of Population Profile of Sri Lanka, 2012**

<b>Ethnic People</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sinhalese</b>	<b>15250081</b>	<b>74.90</b>
<b>Sri Lanka Tamil</b>	<b>2269266</b>	<b>11.15</b>
<b>Indian Tamil</b>	<b>839504</b>	<b>4.15</b>
<b>Sri Lankan Moore</b>	<b>1892638</b>	<b>9.29</b>
<b>Burgher</b>	<b>38293</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Malay</b>	<b>44130</b>	<b>0.21</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>25527</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,359,439</b>	<b>100</b>

Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka  
<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/index.php?fileName=FinalPopulation&gp=Activities&tpl=3> [Accessed on-17/12/2017].

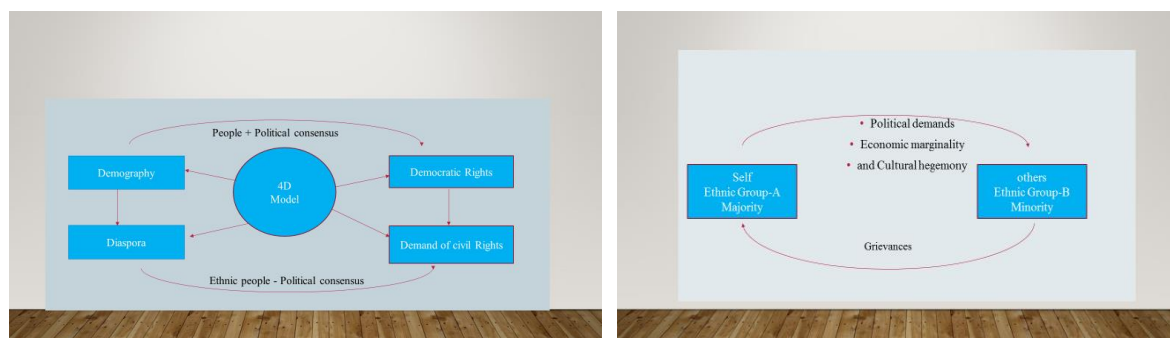
The graphical representation of the above table-3 is as follows:



However, it is significant to state that when the population was estimated on the basis of religion and ethnicity, the maximum proportion of Sinhalese populace was from Hambantota area (97.1 percent) and the small sections of Sinhalese people remained in the headquarters of Northern areas (4.8 percent) and Trincomalee (23.4 percent) and the Batticaloa (1.3 percent) areas of Eastern region amongst the all 25 districts. Amongst the 18 districts areas under consideration, the lowermost proportion of Sinhalese populace and the maximum percent of Sri Lanka Tamil persons were informed from Ampara area. Colombo region included 11.0 percent as per the report of population and housing in 2012 (Census of Population and Housing...2012). On the other hand, the major number of Sri Lankan Tamils remained in several areas of the Northern zone (93.7 percent) and the Batticaloa areas (74.5 percent) of the Eastern region of the island. Subsequently, they remained the majority number in the respective areas. The Sri Lankan Moor people, who believed in Islam, were concentrated in several areas of Ampara 41.3 percent, Batticaloa 23.5 percent, Trincomalee 28.2 percent, and Puttalam 18.8 percent districts in which they constituted majority population together and the neutrally enormous unit was observed in Kandy area (13.1 percent). But then, Indian Tamil encompassed more than half of the common people in Nuwara Eliya areas i.e. 50.6 percent.

When a certain community or ethnic groups demand an autonomous political recognition or regional modification and political legitimatization based on certain values and ideologies, the demand for ethnic distinctiveness gets transformed into the practice of national independence. These demands of separatist political identity among the various ethnic groups encounter social unity and challenge societal articulations. The ethnicity had been the main component of national-independence or nationalism, but the nationalism had been the political expression and appearance of ethno-nationality in the society. In the contemporary nation-state, the ethno-nationalism has been expounded by the community of people owing to the collapse of the state

legitimate organizations and apparatuses which did not serve and provide the opportunities to accommodate the groups of people in a framework of the society.



As the state apparatus failed to provide them equal rights to resources and opportunities, the ethno-centric identity has been grown up on the basis of some principles in multi-ethnic societies (Chopra, 2000: 77). The economic deprivation and the marginalization of groups in society was the very significant device of the emergence of the sense of identity which provoked the ethnic groups to demonstrate the separate identity and political autonomy in the state. The state failed to resolve the problems of economic disparity due to the following factors (Root Causes of the Ethnic...):

- (a) The denial of political rights and cultural marginality in society;
- (b) The absence of active participation and involvement in the devolution of the power of marginal groups in the political decision-making processes and;
- (c) Majority domination over the minority in the social-political framework and;
- (d) The inability of legitimate arrangements to resolve the problems of the poverty breaches among ethnic groups in the political society.

The failure of the constitutional system and management caused the hindrance for the progress of democratic regime and arrangements of the state. It mobilized to spring up the political foundations of ethno-national rejuvenation. According to Murugan Gunasingam, a renowned



writer, the propensity of the contemporary nation-state has to put down the socio-political rights of its marginal as well as minority communities in the social realm and to set up the bindings of state arrangement through their operations and planning (Gunasingam, 2012). The demand for the recognition of identity for minority communities in the political society became the most significant factor in the post-colonial period. As a result, it led to upsurge of the ethnic crisis and consolidating the desire of distinct ethno-national separateness through the formation of the sovereign state.

An interrelated outcome of the state strategies consistently ensuing in ethno-nationalism occurred when unsettled groups escaping national, political and monetary discrimination reside in the more developed the social order and form new cross-cultural characters different from the social order in which they had put down roots. The increasing aggression to their existence leads to these assemblages to state their precision or particularity and to the assembly in various types of ethno-cultural or political manifestations. This political appearance confronted their distinct identity and autonomy on the basis of their spiritual belief, freedom and ethno-cultural sovereignty.

### **Nation Building Process and Amalgamation of the Unitary State**

As the majority people of the island, especially Sinhalese, desired for the united state since independence, the leading political leaders of Sri Lanka were not interested to restructure the British colonial political arrangement and framework. The Sinhalese leading political leaders were aware of the aspiration of Sinhalese people. Consequently, they (during first phase 1948-1956) adopted the steps to establish the unitary state systems. Don Stephen Senanayake was first Prime Minister of Independent Ceylon and Solomon Bandaranaike was an experience senior UNP<sup>6</sup> political leader who performed functions of local government till 1951. He, Don Stephen Senanayake, played a significant role of the negotiation and discussion of Sri Lanka

with the British colonial government on the self-determination issue of the island. In this respect, information furnished by Imtiyaz seems to bear practical significant here. He remarked that the tendencies of Senanayake were disappointed while Senanayake entitled his son, Dudley, as his beneficiary in the political workplace of Ceylon (Imtiyaz: 134). This very decision inspired and propelled Bandaranaike to relinquish the UNP in 1951. Later, he formed a new political party called the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1951 (Gunasinghe, 1984: 56). In the subsequent general elections of 1952, the SLFP<sup>7</sup> won nine seats and UNP had fifty-four seats in Sri Lankan Parliamentary election.

The downfall of SLFP's initial general-elections in Sri Lanka did not mean or indicate their failure in the mainstream political systems. In its place, they systematically structured and planned to organize themselves as an alternative political system within the existing constitutional framework. Most significantly, the SLFP was active in the pro-Sinhalese strategies to politicise the ethno-national relations. In order to ensure its scheduled programme, the SLFP obtained its support from the Sinhalese people and tried to extend its popular encompass to gain power of the mainstream politics in the island. However, the UNP and other left-wing political parties in Sri Lanka did not succeed to attain the target in the political sphere (Biziouras, 2013: 484). Bandaranaike organized many different heterogeneous block structures than the UNP always concentrated on. The SLFP effectively merged the Sinhalese urban businesspersons and industrialists, the countryside small bourgeoisie particularly of the Southern areas, the teachers and educationists of Sinhalese schools, the lawyers, and rural monks or priests (Gunasinghe: 244). These communities were not as much privileged in society and there was nothing to lose for them by affirming the SLFP as a new political party under the leadership of Bandaranaike. They also realized that the rules and policies, established by the UNP remained pro-rich and therefore they recognized them such as pro-West. They correspondingly believed that the Tamil people had occupied a deceitful share of authoritative-

power throughout the Colonial administrative management system due to the advantage for an English lesson which was accessible to these Tamil people. In this condition, only the linguistic problem was an intelligible and definitely comprehensible political motto and expression in the state politics. It functioned as an important issue which integrated the Sinhalese group of people as a community in the leading political phenomenon of the state.

In 1955, Sir John Kotelawela, third Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, officially visited the Tamil provinces of northern areas in Sri Lanka. He gave an official declaration that he would make the constitutional provisions for equal rights and positions for both the Sinhalese and Tamil linguistic communication. Bandaranaike established this (UNP) declaration which was aimed to integrate the support of the Sinhalese people to expel the UNP from the greater political domination. Such people were not hesitant in refusing Kotelawela's language strategy and programme. They were persuaded by the Sinhalese leaders that Tamils were constantly employed in the more beneficial place of public offices and services due to their English learning background (Mahmud, 1993: 217). Furthermore, the SLFP assumed that if they elected in the next general election, they would introduce as an alternative to Sinhalese language. Solomon Bandaranaike complained that ninety percent of the public services and government offices were occupied by the English-learning people who were the minority in number which incorporated less than ten percent of the whole inhabitants in the island (Imtiyaz: 134). In view of that, Solomon Bandaranaike's policy was to emphasize on the linguistic tactic rather than ethno-nationality or racial factors. However, once returned to power, Bandaranaike moved away from its earliest promises and he announced Sinhala will be the only official language of the state of Sri Lanka.

In this context, the effect of the Official Language Act (1956) governed by the leading Sinhalese division was to encourage ethnic politics and to adopt a unitary administrative

arrangements and governmental systems. On the one hand, this condition leads to divide the English educated Sinhalese group and English uneducated Sinhalese. And the language policy separated the Tamils of Sri Lanka according to their language and only administrative language policy which was enacted and applied (Imtiyaz: 134). The Jaffna Tamils were enjoying higher educational opportunities and they enjoyed the professional privileges and political as well as commercial, and efficient leadership. According to R. N. Kearney, when the state asked for service in the government division, the Jaffna Tamils had been preferred and appointed due to their English medium educational orientation (Kearney, 1967: 137). The higher and rich classes of Sinhalese got the opportunity to study in the English medium school. Thus, the Sinhala-only strategy of the Bandaranaike administration was mainly an anti-English discourse and issue. In this connection, this strategy was extended by the administration as an anti-Tamil concern in the sentiments and attitudes of the poor and lower Sinhalese (Nithiyanandan 1987: 114). As a result, the Sri Lankan Tamil politicians mostly Federal Party (FP) and leftists countered and opposed the language policy initiated by the government.

Bandaranaike argued that he did not see any threat (during 1944) in acknowledging Tamil correspondingly as well as an official language (Wilson, 1988: 40). He changed his attitudes and supported the recognition of the Sinhala as an official language in the 1950s on two different grounds; *First*, by introducing Sinhala as the uniform common language of the country that would strengthen the unitary structure of the state; *Secondly*, he wanted to develop a majoritarian Sinhala state by refusing to respect the demands placed by the Tamils. Bandaranaike wished to promote and protect the interests of the Sinhala community (Imtiyaz: 130). A. R. M. Imtiyaz assumed that the Tamil people, marginal section in Sri Lanka, were worried about the inclusion of the Sinhala-only language plan on following three significant grounds:

*First of all*, they were afraid that the inclusion of Sinhala-only administrative language would make difficulties and complications for performing their administrative functions in the governmental employment and would obstruct the possibilities of promoting the governmental higher positions;

*Secondly*, they were persuaded that the Act of Sinhala-only as official language could reduce their basic rights and opportunities in the social phenomenon;

*Thirdly*, it glinted in communal unrests between the Sinhalese and Tamils groups. Lots of differences cropped up in the Parliament between the two sides;

Two hundred Tamils under the leadership of 12 MPs exposed a noiseless protest demonstrative objection outside the Sri Lankan Parliament on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1956. They were stoned to death by Sinhalese persons and Sinhala political leaders. After the ethno-national uprisings exploded in the entire city, several Tamils were attacked and some shops of Tamil people were looted and plundered. Then, Imtiyaz said that the state and its administrative organizations had not authoritatively condemned the situation and did not bring the committers to legitimate justice and fairness (Imtiyaz: 135). In these circumstances, Tamil people had started to lose their belief in the state and its administrative organizations.

### **Accommodative Politics of Nationalities**

In order to conciliate Tamils, Bandaranaike tried to negotiate with Tamil influential leaders like Chelvanayakam, who were gradually becoming antagonistic and challenging to the Sinhalese political leaders. On 26<sup>th</sup> July 1957, he took the positive initiative of signing a treaty with Chelvanayakam, the influential leader of TUF, which was recognized as the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Treaty. The agreement revealed the system for a comprehensive administrative devolution and delegation of powers to the Tamil dominated areas, especially

the northern and eastern sections on the island. It recommended that Tamil dominated Northern Jurisdiction would like to establish a separate provincial authority (Gunasingam, 2012: 39). The more multifaceted eastern region would be separated into double or more administrative organizations on the basis of demographic representation. But all these administrative units would have the freedom to merge, if they accordingly wanted. Furthermore, it was decided that all administrative functions of government would be delegated by the Parliament to the provincial units in the fields like agricultural works and farming, cooperative bodies, land-ownership and development of public property, settlement, educational system, health well-being, trade and business, fisheries, housing facilities and community services, electrical energy, irrigation systems and roadways or else transportation (Wilson 1994: 10-25). Most importantly, it was mentioned in the treaty that *Tamil-language* would be used as the official language for all governmental functions in the north and eastern administrative division. Bandaranaike safeguarded the B-C agreement in the legislative assembly of Parliament and stated that (Ponnambalam 1983: 254-255):

*...we cannot decide these issues on grounds of extremism...naturally, Tamils will have the right to go up to the very summit of education in that medium...the Tamil medium should also be used in examinations...*

The B-C agreement tried to attain four objectives (Kulandaswamy, 2000: 25):

- (i) The treaty provided Tamil-language as formal administrative status for all governmental functions in the North-Eastern regions of the island;
- (ii) It indirectly discerned the regulation that several parts of Sri Lanka would establish a conventional residence or motherland of the community for the Tamils in order to set restrictions for the settlement of Sinhalese farmers in newly water-logged sections of north-eastern regions, thus that the prevailing Tamil masses remained unbroken and integrated;

- (iii) It was assured in the pact to reconsider the problems of voting rights of the Tamil people in the independent state of Sri Lanka;
- (iv) It broadly intensified the provincial organization from that of regions or areas through the negotiations of the self-government.

This agreement was an extensive delegation of power to reduce the racial crisis. It similarly had the source of an accomplishable federal resolution in the long-period of time. When the conditions of the agreement were made public, there was an outburst of aggression, largely from Sinhala radical activists of Bandaranaike's group and the UNP followers and leaders, who remained in the opponent positions in the politics. The UNP had attempted to generate an extensive prospect to achieve political benefit from the problem by struggling for the popular support they had missed in the Sinhalese communities (Imtiyaz: 133). In this regard, M. S. Kulandaswamy illuminating observation in his book '*Sri Lankan Crisis Anatomy of Ethnicity, Peace and Security*' (2000) seems to be pertinent here. He argued that in the mid-1958, the situation was tensed. However, from the Tamil point of view, Bandaranaike reinstated his commitments because he was unable to challenge the upsurge of Sinhalese opposition to the agreement (Kulandaswamy: 25). It seemed to be a total betrayal and duplicity to the Tamils for the inclusion of the *Sinhalese-only Act* in 1956. It was demanded that Tamil language would be given the equivalent important position in the administrative functions of the state.

Furthermore, the followers of the Federal Party, who started the non-violent program for the enactment and execution of the agreement, were challenged in May of 1958. The Jayewardene, Sri Lankan Prime Minister and the followers of UNP opposed the agreement and took an initiative on a march to the centre region of Kandy to set their register for the opposition to the B-C agreement (Kulandaswamy: 25). The FP, for its part, criticized the resolution. They organised several non-violent operations and arranged the anti-government protests in the

north-eastern regions. This non-violent movement took a violent turn and there were aggressive responses from the Sinhalese towards the Tamil people. Then, in May-June 1958, the foremost anti-Tamil uprisings occurred all over the island, especially in the southern Sinhalese dominated territories. According to S. Bose, hundreds of Tamils died and more than 12,000 became homeless in the state (Bose 1994: 62). The fact was that Sinhalese political leaders had chosen and determined to maintain the unitary state structure of the island. Their political control was lost due to the refusal of the semi-federal resolution of Bandaranayake (Imtiyaz: 133).

The general election was held in 1965 when no political party was able to achieve the absolute-majority seats in the Sri Lankan Parliament. The leader of FP realized that it was the ideal time to pressurise the Sinhala dominated politics. The FP's support was required to form the central government in the Sri Lankan Parliament (Gunasinghe: 43). In 1965, there was another effort to counter the ethno-national problem. In 1965, Dudley Senanayake, UNP Prime Minister, and Chelvanayakam FP political leader tried to find out the alternative way for the resolution of the crisis. In this circumstance, the new agreement was planned to delegate the power through the establishment of the district bodies in the Tamil dominated ranges (Imtiyaz: 137). The Senanayake-Chelvanayakam agreement was held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1965. Therefore, this deal (24<sup>th</sup> March 1965) attempted to achieve four significant objects:

- (a) In the North and Eastern provinces, the Tamil Language should be considered the administrative-language and governmental functions or records;
- (b) To set up the District bodies and draw an adequate degree of delegation of powers;
- (c) Senanayake informed that the main objective of his political party was to change the language of the legal system so that the legal minutes and records would be administered and recorded in Tamil in the north-eastern regions of the island;



- (d) The Land Development Ordinance would be revised to recognize the property rights of citizens and the allocation of land under this rule of orders. Dudley Senanayake additionally consented that the subsequent three priorities would be made for allocating the land-property under the colonial plan in the Tamil dominated zones particularly North-Eastern zones of the island;
- (i) Land in the primary example should be allocated among the evicted peoples in the districts of the north-eastern regions;
- (ii) *Secondly*, property-land will be allocated among Tamil speaking people residing in these areas; and
- (iii) *Thirdly*, Land might be left to other inhabitants in Sri Lanka, priorities will be provided to the Tamil peoples residing in the state of Sri Lanka.

But this deal was aborted to achieve the extensive objectives of the island. Donald Horowitz, a renowned writer, correctly explained the causes for the disappointment of this deal. According to him (Imtiyaz: 137):

*“Most important were UNP electoral concerns. Following the 1965 elections, the SLFP had moved back to an anti-Tamil line, portraying the UNP as a party manipulated by the federalists. The district council issue provided a focus for such attacks, spurred by Buddhist monks. Some UNP backbenchers, fearful of the consequences for the government would have got go to the polls by 1970 were on the verge of revolt. In the end, the UNP leadership withdrew the bill.... the party had not yet faced an election with the Federal Party millstone around its neck and did not know how much it weighed”.*

Chelvanayakam on behalf of FP decided to support Dudley Senanayake, UNP leader, on the basis of the promises and assurances made by Senanayake. But the Tamil followers and supporters did not agree to take the obligation and alliance with the UNP party. The Tamil

people strongly thought that the Sinhalese radical activists would stand-up fight against the minimum needs and desires of the Tamils in the framework of society as well as of the state. The FP succeeded to manage the use and practice of Tamil as the language in the judiciary system of Tamil dominated areas, especially in north-eastern regions (Gunasingam: 43). But Dudley Senanayake was not able to carry out any matters decided in the *Dudley-Chelva agreement*. The Jayewardene and members of UNP had strongly opposed this kind of executions. Under the circumstance, FP had withdrawn its support from the UNP government due to the unfulfillment of Tamil desires and expectations.

The Tamils thought that it would be plausible to be a portion of a unified Sri Lankan state and safeguard their political prospects through the implementation of the federal system. However, after 1972, it was clear that Tamil's strong political movement was developed through an issue of the right to cultural autonomy and sovereignty (Gunasingam: 57). They had now motivated a power of struggle against the Sinhalese despotism owing to recuperate their mislaid civil rights, livelihood security, and conventional motherland through the development of a sovereign nation for Tamil.

In the context of the ethno-national commotion on the island, the Ethnic plans of the Jayewardene regiment were very important. In a statement issued on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1977, President Jayewardene told about his government's plan that his administration acknowledged the situation that various complications were provoking the Tamil-Speaking peoples. In this challenging context, the Tamil people in Sri Lanka supported for establishing the independent state of Tamils due to the absence of a resolution to their glitches. Consequently, the Jayewardene government took several steps to reduce the Tamil sagacity of complaints (Rahman: 481):

- (i) In 1978, the new constitution was prepared by his administration to acknowledge Tamil as a connected national language all over the state;
- (ii) All the legal rights accumulated by the principles proclaimed in 1966 and the Tamil Language (Special Provision) Act of 1958, were included into the constitutional provisions so that Tamil people had the right to educate, to interact and communicate with administrative or public organizations and to take the opportunities for governmental positions. Their language was constitutionally recognized to sit in the examinations of the public services;
- (iii) The constitution protected any person's right to obtain Tamil translations of Sinhala government documents. All rules and official papers were needed to be issued in both internal languages. Provisions would be made to use the Tamil language in courts of north and eastern regional areas;
- (iv) The Constitutional provisions were further amended to diminish the difference between *citizen by registration* and *citizen by descent*. The citizenship policies were taken in the provisions of the Citizenship Act (1948-49);
- (v) In 1982, Jayewardene, the President of Sri Lanka, also adopted to establish the structure of District Development Councils<sup>8</sup> (DDCs) after a long-term discussion with the TULF. This administrative structure was planned for the devolution the authoritative-power of the government;
- (vi) Several inequitable provisions regarding the admission of Tamil students to Universities were brought into the end.

The Tamil People were not satisfied with the above-mentioned policies, because most of these policies were not properly implemented. For instance, the District Development councils were planned for the devolution of power, but the government had emphasized on the increase of

centralized-power of the President and avoided the DDCs for the execution of the appropriate powers and sufficient financial power and assistance in their areas. These steps did not reduce in pacifying the grievances of the young Tamils on the island, some of whom determined to choose the way of the aggressive violence in the mid-seventies (Rahman: 481). The Tamil people continuously demonstrated their campaigns of resistance through highway obstructions, hunger strikes, closings of shopping stores and anti-government propagandism. In this circumstance, Tamil politicians and the young people had begun to concentrate on developing their relations with external powers like India, Tamil Nadu and got assistance from them in different manners.

It is significant to mention that the Jayewardene's administrative strategies towards the ethno-nationality had continually been responsible. The government attempted to convince the elite-group of Tamil. The government requested the TULF leaders to participate in the Cabinet of Ministers in the Sri Lankan parliament and afterward to assume two categories of positions as ministers of the district. But TULF did not agree to take the proposal for the participation in the government. Then the government had successfully influenced the Ceylon Workers Congress<sup>9</sup> (CWC) which was the most important political party and on the other hand, it was considered as a trade union of the Indian estate labours, who got the positions at the union cabinet. In the context to participate in the governmental processes, the CWC got away from the political party TULF<sup>10</sup> and the CWC then emerged as very friendly relations with the dominant UNP party and government (Siriweera, 1980, 911). In July 1979, the government took the initiative to prevent the terrorist affairs through the Prevention of Terrorism Act as anti-terrorism law and declared an emergency in the north-eastern domain where Tamils were the majority in number (Rahman: 481). Activity to coup the state and government by unlawful or illegitimate manners had been considered as a punishable offense by death under the emergency act and rules. The special Task Force<sup>11</sup> (STF) as the anti-terrorist group was trained

to control the ever-spreading aggression and violence. But this effort did not attain the anticipated result for the administration and government. It relatively stimulated and fostered the alienation of Tamils from the mainstream political systems and government in the state.

The new Sri Lankan government (the 1990s) attempted to change the nature of the Constitution of Sri Lanka (1978) into a liberal-democratic structure which would defend and safeguard the liberty and rights of the individual as well as the recognition of community in the society. There were three following categories of modifications which were seen in the proposals articulated since 1995 (Wickramasinghe, 2003):

*First*, the constitutional provisions were arranged to democratize the organizations of the state;

*Secondly*, the provisions were made to safeguard the fundamental rights and organizational security of rights and justice in the judicial systems and;

*Thirdly*, some provisions were constituted to upsurge the formal apparatuses for the decentralization of power between the Centre and the provinces, and within the provinces themselves.

In this background, the Sri Lankan Parliament unanimously founded a committee on the resolution of ethno-national variances on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1991. Accordingly, President R. Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka, had nominated Mangala Moonesinghe, member of Sri Lankan Parliament and Stanley Tillekeratne from the chair of opposition political party, to lead a Parliamentary Select Committee<sup>12</sup> in 1991 to solve the ethno-national polarisation between the Sinhala and Tamil groups (Mangala Moonesinghe Parliamentary...1992). The main purpose was (i) to prevent the fragmentation of the territorial integration of the State; (ii) to stop the murders of blameless peoples, officials of the Armed Forces and the young people who were aggressive for a reason; and (iii) to counter the expansion of the militarisation of the

cultural aggressiveness in the state; (iv) to attain the political solution to the question of the separation of power for the Northern and Eastern areas of the state. In addition to this, there was a comprehensive purpose as well i.e. to attain the political security and constancy which shortened the military expenses and enhance nationwide progress.

Thereafter an important development took place on December 11, 1992. The committee members on behalf of the UNP, SLFP, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Sama Samaja Party along with the followers of autonomous bodies like K. Srinivasan, Member of Jaffna District and Basheer Segudawood, members of Batticaloa Area, achieved a pact as follows (Mangala Moonesinghe Parliamentary...1992):

- (a) To set up two separate administrative units in the North-eastern zones of the island;
- (b) To take a system of delegation on parallel lines to those getting in the Indian Constitution and;
- (c) To decentralize further subjects that were in List III (Concurrent List) or to distribute with the List.

The considerable idea was to resolve the constant complications in the Southern areas like exploitation, deficiency, monetary drive, discrimination or disparities, etc. while at the same time forming a structure of power-sharing with the North-Eastern regions in Sri Lanka. The suggestions for constitutional reforms published on August 3, 1995, defined the structural framework of the state as a unification of provinces. Sri Lanka had been a unified and independent State (New Constitution won't...). The proposals of Government on Constitutional Restructures-Developments from 1995 to 2000 were promulgated as per recommendations of the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC). Although the UNP was a part of PSC but it did not take an active role and did not come up with any alternative suggestions and ideas. These propositions of Government attempt to reconsider the constituent base of a

pluralistic society which remained within the cohesive and independent Republic of Sri Lanka based on some subsequent principles:

- a) To promote the perspectives of Sri Lanka where all groups can spend their life in safe and secure conditions, and their human self-respect and dignity must be valuable and the equality was a suitable standard of public life;
- b) To ensure the freedom of all communities that should have the right to express their separate identity and promote the right to enjoy their own culture, right to language and religion and develop their language to execute business with the State in the national language of their preference;
- c) Confirming that all persons may collectively and effectively enjoy their civil rights and fundamental liberties without any discriminations and in full equality opportunity before the rule of law;
- d) To provide the recognition of both Sinhala and Tamil as administrative languages and ensure the recognition of English as a linkage language throughout of the state;
- e) To provide an active constitutional structure for allocating the power with the provinces based on a globally stable and comprehensible value arrangement. There would be transparency and consistency in the devolution of power between the Centre and the provinces. The one system would be accomplished of active execution and able to adopt the framework for the fair justifiable and equitable resolution of centre-province disagreements;
- f) To make sure that all groups of people would be able to join and participate absolutely in the nationwide, provincial or local bodies. This would ensure democratic pluralism.

In the legal text of 1996, the Republic was pronounced as an everlasting incorporation of provinces and the draft constitution of 2000 presented in Parliament that the Republic was unique, free, autonomous and sovereign nation-state which consisted of the organizations of the centre and of the provinces which should workout functional power as made in the framework of the constitution (Wickramasinghe, 204). Expanding the procedure introduced by the Thirteenth Amendment, the constitutional framework required to stretch the actual authority to definite groups of people by means of the distribution of power and authority in all provinces of the state. But the LTTE had rejected the package of schemes in 1996 (New Constitution won't...). Anthon Balasingham was informed to have introduced that they were restricted and insufficient, deteriorating to address the political desires and breaths of the Tamil community in the state. However, the Tamil communities were dissatisfied with the initiatives of nation-building process taken by the Sri Lankan state.

**Conclusion:**

The nation-building process in Sri Lanka was dependent on the values and ideologies of political abilities and progress. Ethno-national characteristics in multi-ethnic cultural societies became the persuasive aspect that fuelled the mobilization of the national dilemma and rigidities. The ethnic divergence and its divergence between the Sinhalese and Tamil people had in fact been entrenched in the procedure of the contemporary state of Sri Lanka. The post-colonial nature of the state-building of Sri Lanka decided to establish the undiversified unitary-state without virtual conditions with the equivalent civil-rights of nationality over the rights of the majority groups. In the process, the Sri Lankan nation-building procedure came to an end with the formation of state-building, which was responsible for the creation of ethno-national polarisation and partition in the unitary state of Sri Lanka.