

## **ABSTRACT**

Sri Lanka gained independence from colonial baggage in the year 1948. Thereafter it started moving towards development, but soon it became entangled with the gruesome ethnic conflict between the two main ethnic groups namely, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The conflict continued for about three decades that disturbed peace and tranquility of the island nation. Intra-state armed conflict – a conflict between the government and non-governmental party without interference from any third country - added a new dimension to the ethnic problems in Sri Lanka. The ethnic plurality of Sri Lanka could have been an asset had the various ethnic groups been evenly distributed throughout the country. Sinhala are the minority in eight out of twenty-four districts. Sri Lankan Tamils on the other hand are in absolute majority in five out of these eight districts. The Tamils which were mainly concentrated in the northern and eastern part of the country regarded it their traditional homeland. Sri Lanka with the exception of Sri Lankan Tamils is largely an integrated society. However, the status of Indian Tamils even prior to independence had been a matter of controversy between the colonial rulers of India and Sri Lanka.

From the very beginning Sri Lanka was unwilling to accept the Indian Tamils as its citizens on the ground of not having permanent roots in the country. This factor made the Indian Tamils settled in Sri Lanka as stateless entity. In other words, Sri Lankan Tamils faced a problem of statelessness. It was widely anticipated and expected that over a period of time through the process of national integration this intricate ethnic problem will be mitigated, if not resolved totally. However, contrary to our expectations, the ethnic problems in Sri Lanka became more and more complicated that resulted in large scale violence across the country for decades together. The government of India had to officially intervene into the matter specifically for two reasons: (i) Identity of the Indian Tamils settled in Sri Lanka in the post-colonial period was at stake due to the faulty political leadership and state policies; (ii) The government of India became conscious about security implications in view of the on-going agitation and movement on the part of the Tamils that continued for about three decades.

It is important to state that the Sri Lankan long-standing ethnic conflict with all its characteristics constitute an ideal case for the analyses of relationship between the ethnic conflict and national security dilemmas between India and Sri Lanka. It is clear that the Tamil separatist struggle on an ethno-regional basis in Sri Lanka in its violent and protracted nature has been vital to the

security and stability of the state. The ethnic conflict has grown to be a serious threat to the internal and external security as well as policy capacity of the state. Even though the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka has become one of the most internationalized ethnic conflicts in the world, the constraints and incentives role played by regional and international actors were not able to secure sustainable peace and security environment in Sri Lanka.

Further, the military victory of the Government of Sri Lanka over the LTTE is not a long-term solution for the national security dilemmas of the Sri Lankan state. Therefore, the Sri Lankan state should have tried to find some common ground between the federal pattern and the existing Provincial Council pattern or for a unitary state system with certain federal features. At the same time, it should work towards complete national unity and integration with the aggregation of national needs, values and interests in the society and a completion of its nation building project to protect the national security interests of the Sri Lankan state.

In view of the above, the present study has been divided into six chapters as follows which has been the subject matter of this research work.

**Chapter I: Introduction: A Conceptual Framework**

**Chapter II: Ethnicity and the Process of Nation Building in Sri Lanka since Independence**

**Chapter III: Ethno-Nationalism: Challenges for Social Harmony in Contemporary Sri Lanka**

**Chapter IV: India's Role in the Ethnic Crisis of Sri Lanka (1983-2009)**

**Chapter V: India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations in the Post-Civil War Years: Security Concerns before New Delhi**

**Chapter VI: Conclusion**

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