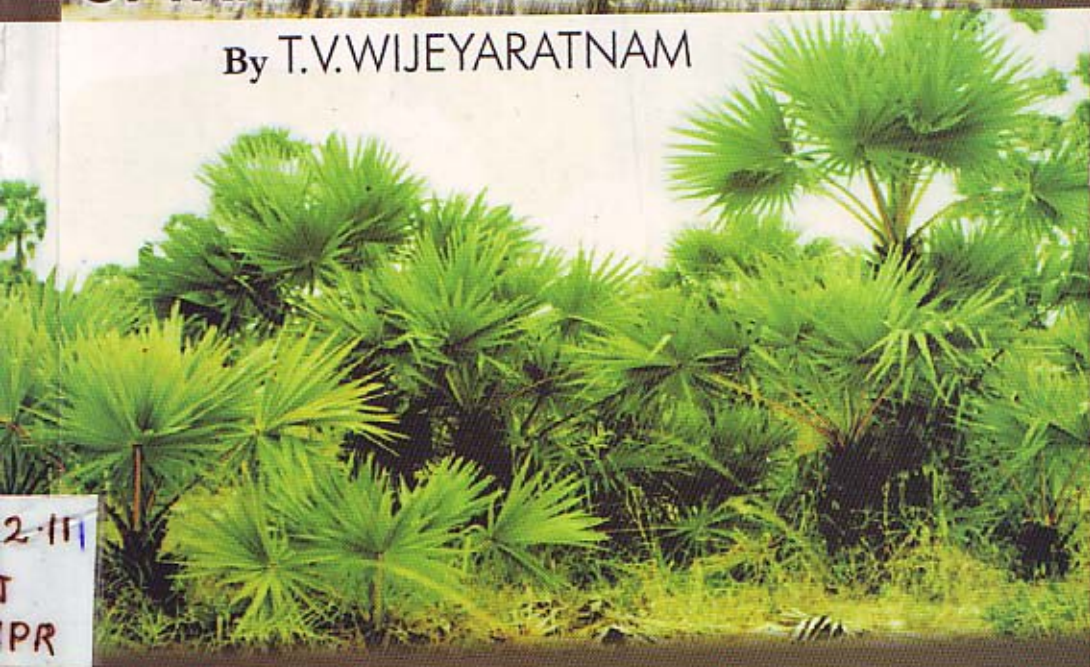


# THE SPIRIT OF THE PALMYRAH

By T.V. WIJEYARATNAM



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**The Spirit of the Palmyrah**

**By**

**Thilaka Vivekanandhan Wijeyaratnam**

## **The Spirit of the Palmyrah**

**Author : Thilaka Vivekanandhan Wijeyaratnam**

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*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high:*

*Where knowledge is free:*

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls:*

*Where words come out from the depth of truth:*

*Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection:*

*Where the stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit:*

*Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action.*

*Into that heaven of freedom, my father let my country awake.*

*This is my prayer to thee: my Lord strike, strike at the root of Penury in my heart.*

*Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.*

*Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.*

*Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.*

*And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.*

**- Rabindranath Tagore**

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this  
book to all the  
present and past  
daughters of my Alma  
Mater, Vembadi Girls'  
High School, Jaffna  
  
and to  
all those Tamil hearts,  
spread all over the  
globe - that are  
yearning and pulsating  
for the renaissance of  
Tamils and Tamil culture  
in general and Jaffna  
in particular.

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## Foreword

"The spirit of the Palmyrah" is the sole effort of a patriotic daughter of the soil, whose family - Proctor Aiyathurai family - were well-known in Jaffna in the forties and fifties. The writer's older siblings were my contemporaries at Vembadi Girls' High School, sixty odd years ago. This book is a factual encyclopaedia, interspersed with anecdotes and quotations. It covers the history of Jaffna in a nutshell, gives a detailed account of the life- style and culture as experienced by her and contrasts the peaceful Jaffna of the mid-twentieth century with the war-ravaged Jaffna of today. After much research and toil, she has compiled a comprehensive list of the illustrious sons and daughters of Jaffna, covering the period under review. Discrepancies and omissions may be evident but can be over - looked in a book of this nature. Those who love their home land, especially Tamil expatriates abroad will find this book useful to encourage their children, born and bred on foreign soil, to trace and keep in touch with their roots.

Our heartfelt thanks should be extended to the writer whose ties with Jaffna are deeply rooted.

**G.K.Thambar**  
(nee Poovathy Mather)

## PREFACE

When Bama Somasundaram an old girl of Vembadi Girls High School my Alma mater asked me to write a book on Jaffna, I was flabbergasted. How could I ? I thought, I forgot the matter. When a second time and third time Bama asked me, I thought about it seriously. But where am I to start and how am I to start? I had no clue. I consulted my close friend and media personality Satsorubavathy Nathan and she advised me to meet Dr.S.Pathmanathan Professor of History at the Department of Hindu culture. So I made a bee-line to the professor who gave some valuable information on the archaeological findings in Jaffna. I also went through his book, "The kingdom of Jaffna".

Writing on Jaffna where I was born and bred, where I learnt what it is to be a member of a large family, what blessings joint family system endowed and what are the social implications of our system of life are, aroused so many sentimental thoughts in me. I think of my father (Late Proctor Kandavanam Aiyadurai of Neeraviady, Jaffna) and my husband Late Vivekanandhan (viva) Wijeyaratnem at this moment. But for these two men of calibre, I would still be hibernating in the cocoon of orthodoxy.

Father gave us a liberal upbringing and my husband was more than a liberal, so much so that I never wanted to be liberated! And my two sons Ganesh kumar (kumar) and Mayuran who were a joy and a

pride in their infancy and now a comfort to me, would, in the absence of my father and their father, stand by me in whatever I do.

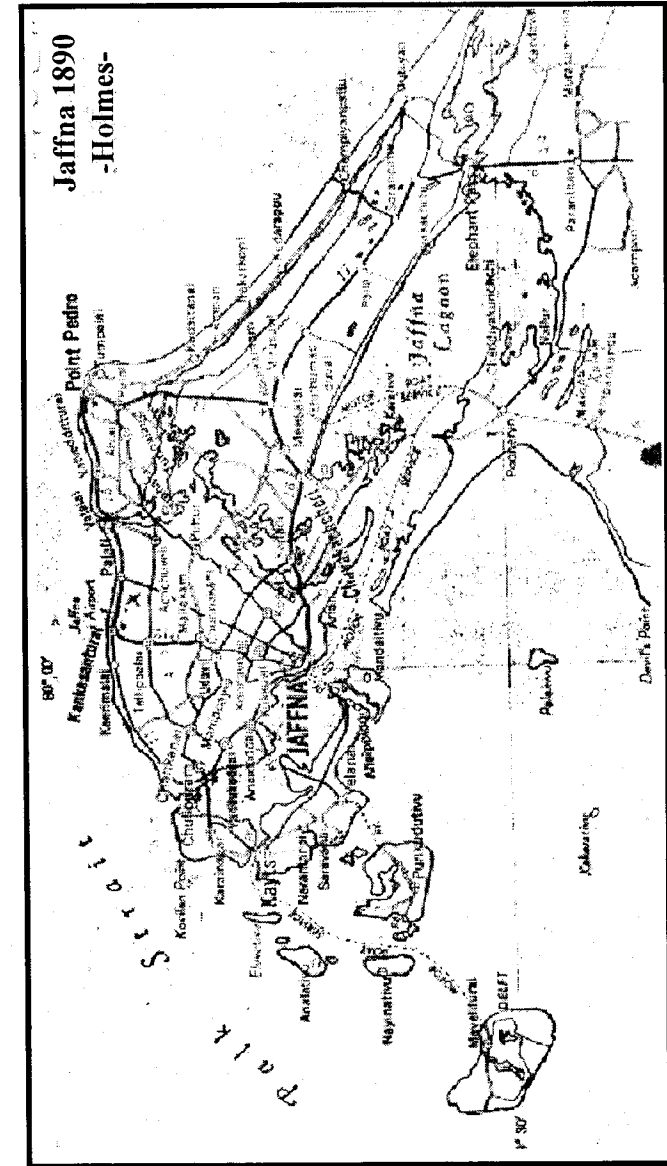
So I launched on the matter with zeal and with help from many unexpected quarters.

I do not deal much on Geography History, and Politics, but cover more on the life of the simple man of Jaffna, and also all the misery and hardship he underwent in the hands of " Insolent authorities". This have I revealed to those who hardly have any idea of the people of the North except to believe they are out for a fight. Let everyone know how justified they are in their fight for a decent living free from suppression and oppression and wish to live with dignity in a land free of evil, "where the mind is without fear", In Tagore's words, "where the head is held high where knowledge is free".

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### MAP OF JAFFNA





## The Spirit of the Palmyrah

### 01. The Geography of Jaffna

The little head of a peninsula, the topmost part of the island of Sri Lanka, projects into the blue waters of the Indian Ocean. Its oceanic boundaries are the Bay of Bengal in the East, the Palkstrait in the North and the wide spreading Indian Ocean in the West. Being constantly assaulted by the sea, the island itself has shrunk. The continental shelf is proof of the island being linked to the subcontinent once upon a time.

The island is about 4° North of the equator, and between 80° - 81° E longitudes.

The whole island experiences a tropical climate with two monsoons - The South West and the North East which bring rain to the country. The hot season leaves the land dry and parched. The Jaffna peninsula also has had its share of rain and sunshine, both literally and metaphorically.

Traversed by lagoons which bring water, and bereft of rivers due to the limestone in the soil, it has its own consolation by way of fresh water wells, which also provide water for agriculture.

Even within its small area, the peninsula boasts of a variety of soils.

The famous red soil from which spring mango trees providing those delicious tasty Jaffna Mangoes - peculiarly named Vellai Colombo and Karuthai Colombo, is found in and around Chunnakam. The lime stone is along the Northern coast and North West coast. Along the lagoons the

Upparu and Thondamanaru of Vadammaradchy, is a stretch of briny soil, and in the North East and South West are found strips of white sand. Barring these areas, other parts have the loam - a mixture of clay and sand.

It is these soil types that determine the economic growth of the land. The Jaffna man, an out and out cultivator from the beginning, has utilised this factor for agricultural purposes. Apart from acres and acres of palmyrah and coconut palms there were scrub jungles spoken of in the past. But due to human encroachment these have disappeared now. The Jaffna Peninsula gets its rainfall during the North East monsoon. During the South West monsoon the rainfall is experienced by the Southern and Western parts of the island, and the North and North East then get a wonderful breeze called Cholaha Kattu - and the people of Jaffna await this cool breeze - nay, Zephyr to soothe their hot brows caused by a stretch of hot dry season between monsoons.

There are some islands that also form part of Jaffna. Karainagar, and Velanai that has produced the likes of Sir Vaithilingam Duraiswamy, and Pungudutivu and Mandaitivu can be reached by road. However, Eluvativu, Paavativu, Analativu, Nainativu (better known as Nagadeepa) and Neduntivu- Delft- are the other islands lying strewn in the West of the Peninsula. Boats operate between the peninsula and these islands.

Most of the islanders used to come to Jaffna seeking jobs and education. Later the islands have developed and had schools built so that they could study in their own areas.

A good number of teachers from these islands have joined Educational Institutions here and abroad.

They are very intelligent and industrious as the man in the Peninsula and have contributed to the speedy development of their own little islands.

Now the Peninsula is divided into four regions. Vadamadachi in the North and East coast, Velikamam in the central and Western area Thenmaradchi in the South and Pachchilaipalli, also South of Velikamam.

## 02. The History of Jaffna

“History was the product of Divine Will” - Homer

Chronicling is not my cup of tea. But reading chronicles has been my past time. However the little knowledge of history I have is due to historical novels both in English and Tamil that I have read. Reading through “The Politics of Portugese intervention in Jaffna by T.Tikiri Abeysinghe I got to know that there was a kingdom in Jaffna ruled by many kings. Deeply interested in the subject, I went in search of further books on the topic and found Dr.S.Pathmanathan’s, “Kingdom of Jaffna” and, “The History of Jaffna” by C.Rasanayagam, “Ancient Jaffna” by Mudaliar C.Rasanayagam and the Dictionary of Biography of the Tamils of Ceylon by S.Arumugam. Besides these, foreign chronicles by H.C.P.Bells, S.Nilakantha Sastri and a host of others confirm the fact that there were Tamil Kings ruling as early as 1215 AD.

There had been many controversial articles in many news papers about the history of the Tamils. Some even assert that the Tamils have only 250 years of history. This is ridiculous because even some of the schools in Jaffna are reaching their 200<sup>th</sup> year of existence.

Mr.Arumugam’s Dictionary of Biography of the Tamils of Ceylon, mentions the reign of the celebrated Ariya Chakaravarthi Kings of Jaffna with Nallur as their Capital.

“Pandi Mallavan, son of Selvaraja of Ponpethiyar, a well established colonist of Jaffna went to the Pandiyan court in India and requested for a Prince to rule over Jaffna.

Singai Ariyan, a nephew of Singhaikethu, who was studying state craft at the Royal College in Madurai was selected, The prince arrived in Jaffna accompanied by a Royal retinue, and founded the Tamil Kingdom of Jaffna, at Nallur. He and his successors came to be known as Ariya Chakravarthi Singhai Aryan Kings of Jaffna. They adopted the epithet names of **Segarajasekaran** and **Pararajasekaran** alternatively during their reign. Their reign lasted 403 years from 1215 A.D. The first twelve who succeeded their father, were independent monarchs while the rest ruled under the suzerainty of the Portugese.

The traditional chronicles of Jaffna, "Yalpana Vaipava Malai" composed in 1736, and the "Kailaya Malai" written centuries earlier mention the series of kings who ruled Jaffna. **Mudaliyar C. Rajanayagam** in his "Ancient Jaffna" has allocated a period to each on average basis. It has an indicative value, though it may sound unsatisfactory.

#### Kings of Jaffna

Vijayakulankai	A.C.S	1215 - 1240
Kulasekera	S.A.P	1240 - 1256
Kulatunga	S.A.S	1256 - 1279
Vikrama	S.A.P	1279 - 1302
Varothya	S.A.P	1302 - 1325
Marthanda	S.A.P	1325 - 1348
Kunapushana	S.A.P	1348 - 1371
Virothaya	S.A.P	1371 - 1380

Jayaweera	S.A.S	1380 - 1410
Kunaweera	S.A.P	1410 - 1440
Kanagasuriya	S.A.S	1440 - 1450
Sempaha Perumal Agent of Kotte king		
Later Buvaneka Bahu		1450 - 1467
Kanaga Suriya	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time	1467 - 1478
Pararajasekaran	Si	1478 - 1519
Sangili	S	1519 - 1561
Puviraja Pandaran	P	1561 - 1565
Periya Pille	S	1565 - 1582
Puviraja Pandaram	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time	1582 - 1591
Ethirmanasingam	P	1591 - 1615
His Infant Son with Arasakesari As Regent		1615 - 1617
Sangili Kumaran (Sangili II)		1617 - 1618
End of Tamil Regime		1618

(Note : S.A. .... Singiaryan

Si ..... Singai

S ..... Segarajasekaran

P ..... Pararajasekaran)

Mr.Tikiri Abeyasinghe states in his book "The Politics of Portugese intervention in Jaffna" that he went to Portugal and perused

many chronicles on Portugese in Ceylon (then) and he also went to Goa to delve into Portugese rule in Jaffna. There were three powers then overlooking matters concerning Jaffna. One in Lisbon, one in Colombo and the other in Goa.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in circa 1560, the viceroy Don constantino de Bragance led an expedition force against the Jaffna ruler who held those converted to Christianity, as traitors and persecuted them. Until then Mannar was under the king of Jaffna. When he (the king) put to death about 600 converts for treason, the Portugese captured Mannar and annexed it to the Portugese crown.

Portugese were attracted by Jaffna for the following reasons : first its strategic position - the triangle formed by Chilaw, Cape Comorin and the Palkstrait. Next, the Peninsula was a natural transit route through which reinforcements from S.India passed through Jaffna to Kandy which was bravely resisting the Portugese. Jaffna also was then a center for trade of elephants.

When Portugese defeated the king and brought it under their flag, the king paid a regular annual tribute of ten elephants or their value in money . In 1591, the Portugese ruler, Andre Furtado de Mendona killed the ruler and set up one of his own choice on the throne. The ruler was forced to allow unrestricted Catholic missionary activity.

The ruler **Pararajesekaran** (Edirmanasinghan before accession) helped the king of Kandy, Vimala Dharma Suriya I in 1593 - 1604 and Senarath 1604 - 1675 to get help from Tanjore in South India to pass

through his territories. He also had an undercover campaign against catholic missionaries, and did not favour converts.

In 1619, Jaffna's monarchy ended and the kingdom was incorporated into Portugal's Asian Empire. In April 1617, Pararajesekaran died. There was then a tripartite struggle for power. One by the legitimists who rallied round the heir and lawful guardian, next a set of Christian Mudaliyars planning for a Portugese take over of the kingdom and a third set favouring Sangili Kumaran, a nephew of the deceased ruler.

Sangili won and appealed to the Portugese to confirm his regency and support him against the other two groups.

As no help came from the Portugese, he turned towards the Nayaks of Tanjore and the arrival of the forces strengthened Sangili's position. In March 1619 a party of five Malabar Paros (small sailing boats regarded as pirates by the Portugese, set up temporary head quarters Delft. This was a serious threat to the Portugese. There was tension anytime a war would break out. In October 1618, when the Christian Mudaliyars revolted against Sankily, the council of state in Goa decided to act.

They wanted the Portugese fleet preparing to leave for Mylapore to attend to this problem. There was dual threat to the Portugese - one, by the Malabar's raiding fleet in Delft and the other the presence of foreign troops in Jaffna. The commander General in Colombo took matters into his hands. He was Constantino de Sa de Noronha He was an

empire builder. Jaffna was eventually captured and Sankili and party tried to escape to South India. They were intercepted and taken prisoners. He was tried for his crimes and executed. His family was converted to Christianity. His sister, young princess was baptised as Dona Catherina de sa.

Thus ended the Jaffna kingdom. It became a Portugese colony.

03. "To plunder, to slaughter, to steal - these things they misname empire, and when they make a desert they call it peace"

- Calgacus

The cruelty inflicted upon the Jaffna community by the Portugese and the atrocities committed by them cannot be related in a few words. After the holocaust in 1983, a party leader from the South ( whose name I cannot recall) seemed to have remarked, that even the Portugese did not do such destruction. That perhaps may make the present generation understand what Tamils of Jaffna underwent in the hands of the Portugese. It seemed they destroyed the prestigious Nallur Temple and even dug up the foundation - where is the Temple now and where are the Portugese ? The resistance and stamina of the people who did not give up their religion even in the face of death is indeed admirable. They rebuilt the Nallur Temple. The magnificent Temple stands, a guardian of the Hindus of Jaffna. Within the forty years of their rule, the Portugese did all they could to erase the identity of the Tamils especially the Hindus who like the mythical bird phoenix rose from the ashes again and again to perpetuate the race. Some say they are an endangered species. I

would say they are a rare species for inspite of the enemy being ruthless and powerful they, the proud Jaffna people, rose against them but lost to the enemy as they had weapons the like of which the Tamils did not possess. At the end of forty years the Dutch took over Jaffna. The Portugese killed in the name of their religion and as one cynic observed:

They fought for religion,

They burnt men and property alike for religion,

They caused destruction for religion,

They killed for religion but -

They never lived for religion!

"Divided Rule and Foreign Rule are both unadulterated evils"

Kauthilya

After forty years of cruel rule the Portugese were chased out by the Dutch who were more interested in establishing trade than in spreading their religion.

In circa 1658 A.D. the Dutch walked into Jaffna from Mannar. It is not necessary for this account of Jaffna, to trace the history of the Dutch conquering the whole island. The Dutch fought, destroyed or captured resisting Portugese - known as Parangiyar by the Tamils - laid seige to the famous Fort of Jaffna. Terronimo de Paiva the Portugese captain, surrendered to the Dutch - C.Rasanayagam in his history of Jaffna states that the Parangiyar in the Fort ran short of food and survived on

the flesh of the cats and the dogs there. Almost 1600 died of sickness and starvation and finally they came out with a white flag. So the Dutch captured the Fort which has played a major role in very recent times too. The Dutch wanted only to improve their financial factor. It was at this time, there was a conspiracy against the Dutch. A Catholic priest, about five or six Portugese who vowed loyalty to the Dutch, a leader from Mannar and one Poothathamby led the coup that failed. Needless to say what brutal punishment was meted out to them. There was however a controversy over Poothathambi's role. It seemed one of his personal enemies had given his name to the Dutch. He had his own axe to grind. The case for Poothathambi was argued by Mylvahana Pulavar.

The Dutch named the islands by Dutch names. Karaitivu was Amsterdam, Urathurai was Kayts, Thannitivu - Leyden, Pungudutivu was Middleberg, Nainativu (Nagadipa) Hearlem, Analaitivu Rotterdam, Iranaitivu - Hoon or Enkuysen. In spite of these change of names, the minute they left Jaffna, the old names were used without any delay. The successor had scant regard for the conqueror's orders.

Jaffna that was suffering silently under the Portugese rule seemed relaxed under the rule of the Dutch. Ryckloff van Goens the 1<sup>st</sup> commander, and his officers and some Tamils of the upper strata of society, were given the authority to administer the affairs of the land. But in 1694, those in the lower strata of society also were given positions which sparked off a riot by Vellalas and Vanniyars.

**Don Philip Sittampala Mudali** who got the title of the much coveted 'Don' was given a lot of concessions by the Dutch, higher ups.

He was given 12 civiars (those who carry the Pallaku or Palanquin). He could wear the head dress (Thalaipahe) anywhere at any time, he could also be carried in his pallaku and have an umbrella held over his head. It is quite an experience to peep into this era of the history of Jaffna and I am glad I got a chance to let the younger generation also know what and what happened to their fore fathers in Jaffna at various eras of History. Those who were favoured by the Dutch were conferred the title of 'Don'.

The first Mannar accountant was named Vas Imanuel Rajakariyamana Mudaliyar, and after his death his nephew(?) or son-in-law Velayuthan Tuan Ramanathan with the name of Don. Juan Rajakariya Ratnasingha Mudaliyar continued the profession. He was also given six slaves, non- government servants. The first Doctor of Jaffna office was Don. Tuan Kandappa Ilangai Kavala Mudaliyar. After his death, Tellippalai Poologasinghe Mudaliyar Philip Kumara Velan took over. He was given a salary and six slaves non- government servants. In 1658 AD Jaffna population was estimated to be 1,20,000. In 1766 it was 1,87,000.

The laws were according to those in custom and tradition in Jaffna at that time. There was a Raad vas Justice - the equivalent of the present supreme court. The next court is the land Raad for land cases. Then a smaller court called Civil Raad - to inquire into contracts - etc.

The Batavia laws compiled by Joan Maatyuker - commander were in force then. But only those clauses not included in the Thesavalamai were in it.

At the start the Dutch didn't bring their families. Hence they married Portugese women and adopted their language and customs. Though the Dutch ruled for 148 years and the Portugese for 38 years, the language and customs of the Portugese were incorporated in their lives. So the Dutch colonised the land. The Dutch married native women too. When the Dutch captured Jaffna, they encouraged the people to follow their reformed religion. The people were baptised by numbers mainly they (the people) did so out of fear, and with the intention of getting state employment.

In 1689 Lord of Mydrecht, the consul for India and Ceylon got all the Catholic Churches and missions destroyed and established seminaries to train their priests. So what the Catholics did for the natives boomeranged on them. What more proof of the old maxim, "History repeats itself". As we go on we would see many more such repetitions. A priest called Balders in 1658 AD. To 1665 AD. stayed in Jaffna and did religious service in Jaffna.

He had written a book on Christianity in detail, and also about the customs and traditions of the Brahmins, Vellalar and other folks of Jaffna. There is supposed to be a tamarind tree under which he stood preaching to the people.

Though at the beginning of their rule, the Dutch were lenient towards the non-Christians, later on they took strict measures to spread their religion. So for the second time, the Jaffna Hindus had to suffer the same ordeal in foregoing their religion. Again during the last stages of their rule, the Dutch relaxed their rule, on religion and showed more

interest in promoting trade and amassing wealth. The Jaffna Hindus grasped this golden opportunity to renovate and rebuild their temples.

"History is not a web woven with innocent hands. Among all the causes which degrade and demoralize man, power is the most constant and the most active." - Lord Acton

"His sacred Majesty chance, decides everything"

- Voltaine

**Vaithilingam Chettiyar** of Vannarpannai, being on good terms with the Commander got their help to build the Vannai Vaideeswarar temple in 1971 and even had the Kumbashekam and donated land and property to the temple.

In 1793, some Brahmins appealed to the Dutch Govt, to rebuild the Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil which was totally destroyed by the Portugese.

The Dutch rebuilt the Jaffna Fort with corals. They had only to build the moat. They kept war weaponry in the Fort. In 1768 AD, there were sixty four tanks, with guns mounted and about 57,000 pounds of gun powder. They built a church too within the Fort. The Dutch also built an orphanage.

The **Pandara Vannian** drama depicts the fight of the Vanni people against the Parangiyar. It has been on the boards in Jaffna and Vanni many times so much so that no one can forget it.

The Dutch were devoted to trade. The many items traded were elephants, paddy, cotton, dyes, weaving textiles and dyeing, horse

trading at Delft, conch shells and pearls, salt, Timber, coral stones and (lime) spices from the South, and so on. In fact they used all the resources to the maximum to get financial gain.

There were taxes on people - children elders and the handi - capped excluded. Land tax, timber tax, customs duty, transport tax, tax on coconut palm, tobacco, cloth, tax on jewellery, marriage and for the authorities, fish, death, market, taverns, brokerage, slavery, deer skin, all under the tax system.

Atrocities were committed by the administration on many occasions. To this day the Jaffna man is used to many such atrocities committed against him by inhuman authorities. It is his spritual strength bestowed upon by the gods that has given him the stamina to go through it all.

The Dutch never respected the sentiments of the Hindus and forced them to give their cattle, cows and calves to kill and eat. There was a law as to how many such animals should be given by whom and when. The people loved their animals. They love them even now - like their own children and suffered such mental agony. So some of them left for India, rather than face the wrath of the ruler for refusing to give their cows and calves.

One such person was Gnanapragasar who learnt Tamil and Sanskrit in India and became a brilliant scholar of Saiva Sidhantham and translated and wrote the meanings of Saiva texts, He is still remembered as a Tamil scholar in the annals of the History of the Tamils of Jaffna.

In 1649 AD Robert Knox and several English men landed in Kottiyar, Trincomalee. The tamarind tree at the place Robert Knox and others were arrested by the Kandyan soldiers, still goes as 'Knox's tree'.

The Dutch introduced copper coins and gold coins. In 1758 AD silver coins were in short supply, and this led to the value of silver and gold going up.

The Dutch possessed exclusive monopoly on trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and when the British found this out they tried to take command of the trade by launching the East India Company. They tried to take full command of the situation. After landing in India, they eyed Ceylon for the following reasons:

- (1) The natural harbour at Trincomalee
- (2) Strategic point between East - West Trade routes.
- (3) Could be a central spot to operate transport to India.

So from 1658 - 1795 AD, the Dutch ruled the coastal areas of Ceylon. In August 1795 AD the British attacked the Dutch and Captured Trincomalee harbour and Jaffna in September.

"History is the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another"  
- Burckhardt

It is irrelevant to relate British capturing the rest of Ceylon for I like to categorically refer to the affairs of state in Jaffna after the British took control of Jaffna.

English became the official language and the Jaffna man who is always concerned about his family and close relatives, and those being



days of joint family system, had to manage the whole crowd in his home. Industrious man that he is, he went out for English Education zealously and whenever an efficiency bar exam was held, he was there without fail trying to get promotions and climbing the ladder of success to give the best for the family.

So in Jaffna there emerged a crowd of professionals holding top posts in the government and very duty conscious and earning an honest living. This combined with his deep religious involvement led him to great heights. Indeed I shall mention those who achieved great heights in another chapter.

Whoever ruled from Colombo ruled Jaffna too with their representatives.

As the Britishers found administration of different states complicated for many reasons, the main reason being social and economic, brought the whole island under one rule. The Kandyan Kingdom in 1815, and the coastal areas were all under the British. To make governance easy, they set up many Departments like the Postal Department, Survey Department, Employment Bureau and so on.

For the persevering man, the British gave an opportunity to progress and so they went ahead for the betterment of their families.

The British brought in many reformed ways. Etiquette, good manners, punctuality that cultivated good habits among the people. They did not interfere with the culture, tradition, customs and the ageless value of the locals. There were antigovernment rebellions which were

suppressed. History students will know about the Donough More Council and how as there were faults, people revolted against implementing the constitution and as a result, the Soulbury Commission tried to find a solution to satisfy the public. The House of Representatives and the Senate came into being.

In 1947, Mr.D.S.Senanayake became the first Prime Minister. On February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948 Ceylon got her independence.

“Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our country men”  
- Ghandhi.

Here I would like to say what life was in Jaffna under D.S.S. All troubles were smoothed and people returned to a normal peaceful life. The Prime Minister visited Jaffna, and as girl guides then, we gave him a warm welcome. We stood close to him and he looked down and beamed, pleased with us. I still remember the scene.

Sinhalese language was introduced in all the schools and there was a monk in every school. My brother and his friends used to collect flowers for the Buddhist shrine the monk had.

They would sit and chat with him. It was a friendly nation. All were at peace with each other and the world at large.

Then came the Sinhala only cry. The Sinhalese lessons were terminated and the monks taken in procession to the Town Hall, honoured and escorted to the Railway Station and sent off honourably. The chief of the Buddhist priests said at the Railway Station that they had never come across such a gentle and refined community as the Jaffna

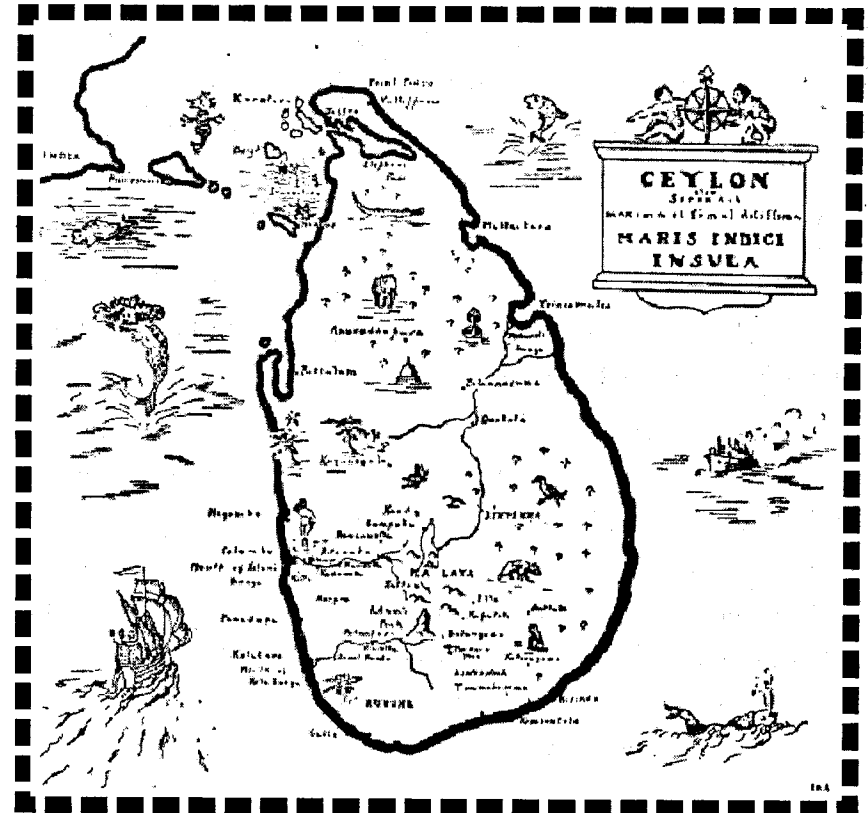
Tamils, and he truly regretted leaving them. It was not mere words of praise. That was how people were in Jaffna. So gentle and refined, friendly and helpful and above all so socially conscious. What has changed this man from the North? The God fearing simple and humble man?

The communal fire set alight by bad, short sighted politics is ablaze now bringing in its wake death and destruction, mutual distrust and hatred. Those who have gone through all this would be able to trace the incidents to its final point. We will take up the subject at a later stage.

“It is not so much the mere existence of a nation that counts, but what the nation does during various periods of existence”

- Jawaharlal Nehru.

## PORTUGUESE COMING TO CEYLON (THEN) Romantic Ceylon R.H.Basset



### 03. Archaeological Findings

“Archaeology gives information used to build a picture of the culture that produced the objects.”

Apart from these historical details mentioned earlier, the archaeological findings are further proof of the kingdom of Jaffna. I got first hand information of the presence of coins belonging to the Tamil Kingdom during archaeological excavations, from **Dr.S.Pathmanathan** author of the “Kingdom of Jaffna”. According to him:

There are about 1500 Brahmi inscriptions. Rev.Canagaratnam studied these Brahmi inscriptions and wrote a small book called “Ethnic Pluralism in ancient Sri Lanka”.

There are words which are Tamil in prakrit forms. There are other words which could be identified as Dravidian or Tamil origin, said **Dr.Pathmanathan**. He further said these inscriptions belonging to 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. were instrumental in the development of culture. Coupled with this or earlier was the penetration of megalithic culture of S.Indian origin. Before this in Sri Lanka, the old stoneage microlithic was followed by megalithic age. The latter shows great advance in culture, use of iron and other metals black and red ware for traffic.

This megalithic culture was prevailing basically in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, South Andra, Kerala and not beyond Vindya Mountains in the North. These megalithic people had used grafiti marks in their patterns similar to those in Tamil Nadu. In the Northern parts of Sri Lanka,

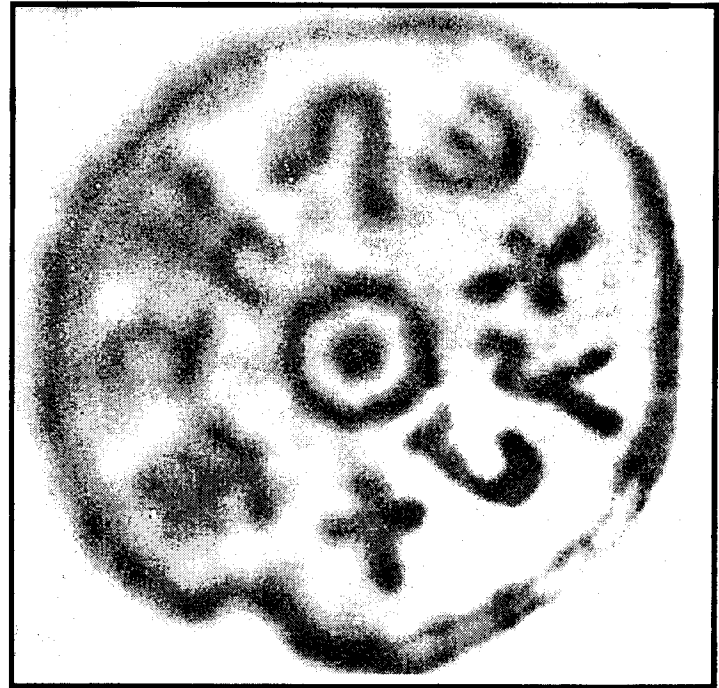
we get pottery with graffitti inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi letters. Prakrit was a lingua franca link language used in the Indian sub continent until 4<sup>th</sup> century.

There are large numbers of coins of several varieties. One of which is called the Lakshmi plaque. They are rectangular lead pieces. Mostly found in the Northern parts of Puttlam, Sammanthurai, Kandarodai, Poonegiri, Mantai etc. They speak of fifteen varieties. Trident, bull, spear, Swastikam, Nandhipadam, Thandapamiam are found indicating that they were issued by princes and traders who were saivaite Hindus. These were said to be in circulation from 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

The professor of History **Dr.S.Pathmanathan** further said that there are also very large number of coins issued by kings of South India which were brought here for trade. Local rulers and others had also issued coins with similar devices and these are found only in Sri Lanka.

All these accounts of the archaeological findings were a delight to know about. It is an established fact that there was monarchy in Jaffna once upon a time. Thanks to **Mudaliyar Rasanayagam**, **T.kirti Abeyasinghe**, **C.Rasanayagam**, Profesor **Dr.S.Pathmanathan** who with their texts enlightened me on the subject. As they have Bibliographical lists from which they gave all the valuable information on Jaffna and her glorious era of kings and wars, I deemed it not necessary to go through the very same texts mentioned in the Bibliography. The great chroniclers have made things easy for me.

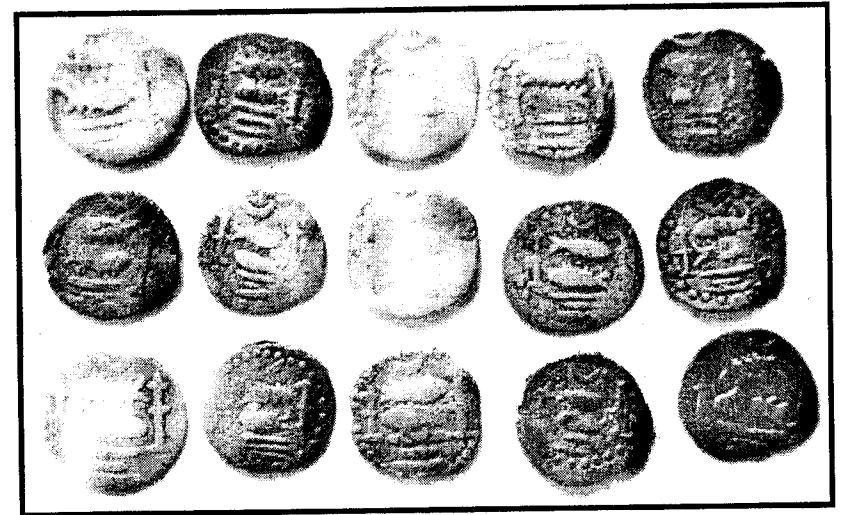
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS**



*Kapathi Gajaban at Akkurugoda – Hambantota  
This state which has the Tamil name is etched as on a coin.  
Period - over 2,400 years*



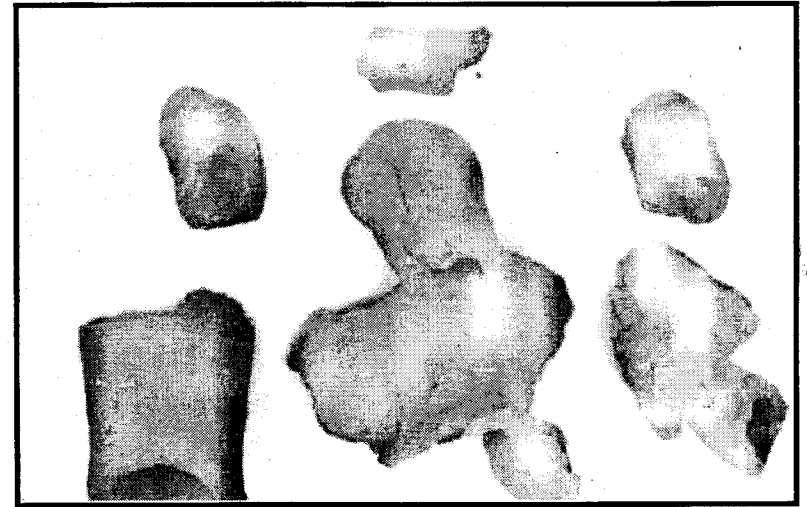
*A Siva Temple of the Chola Era - at Poonagari, Mannithalai*



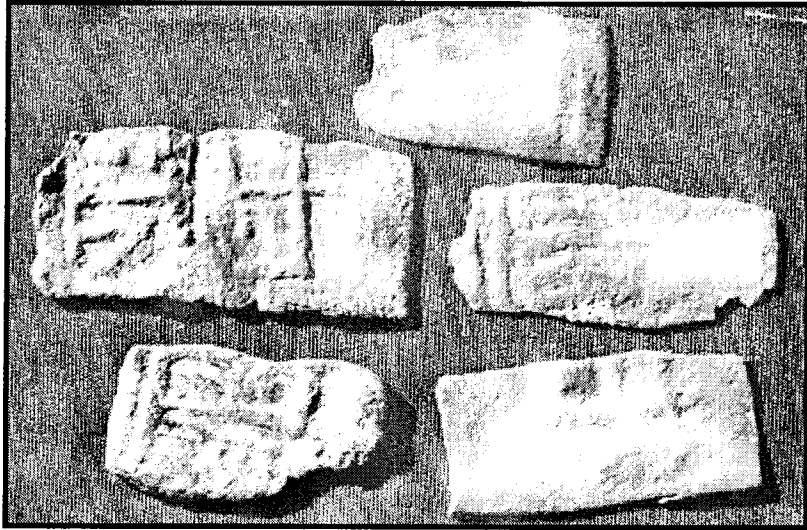
*The Naga country, area north of A'pura coins of A.D 12- 13.  
Found at Poonagari*



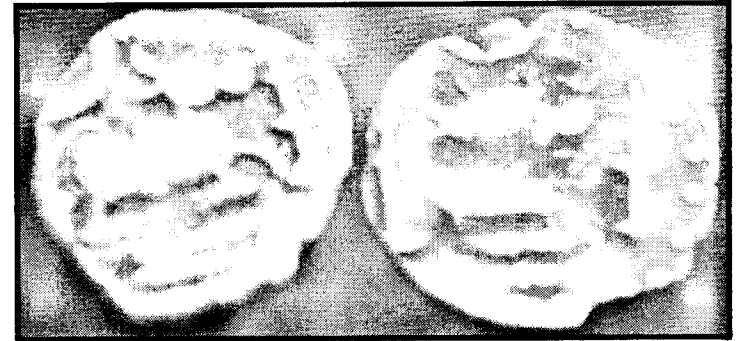
*This coin was named Sri Devi AD 10 -11 Thenniyankulam*



*A Lakshmi idol found at Thenniyan kulam 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D*



*The coins of the Tamils found before 2,300 years at Poonagari*



*Coins of Naga country – 10 – 12 A.D at Uduthurai.*



*Clay figures found at Poonagari more than 2,500 years*

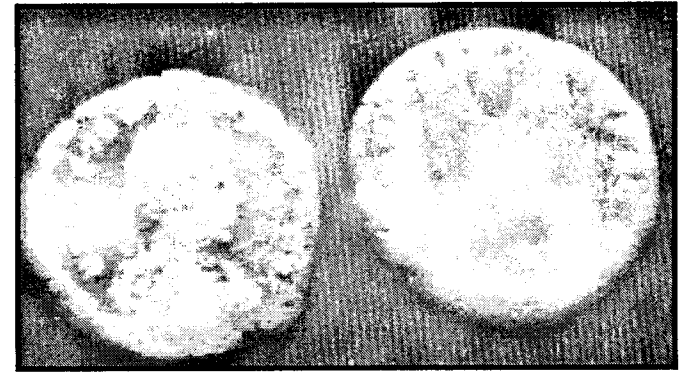


*The culvert of king Rajaraja Cholan found at Manatkerni*

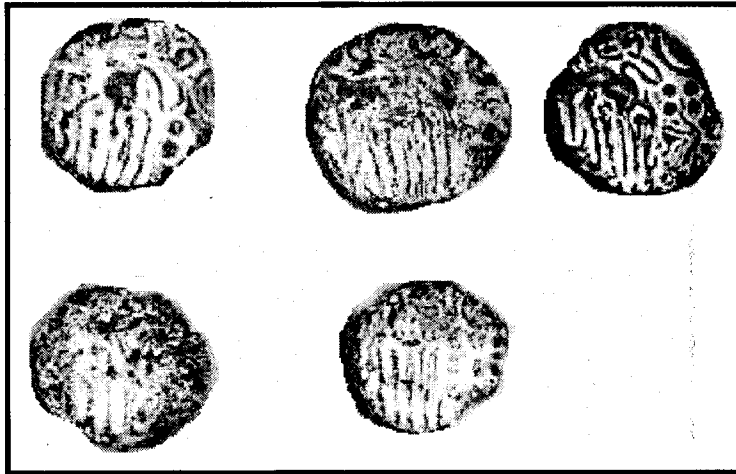




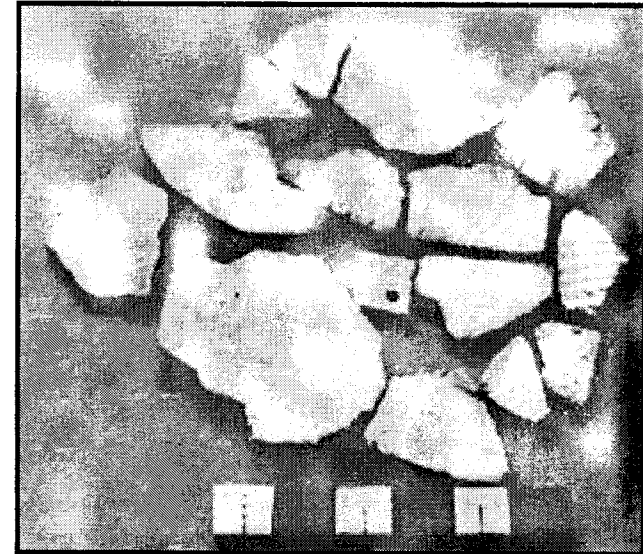
*A Tamil culvert found at Kantalai tells about Cholan  
Ilangeswaran*



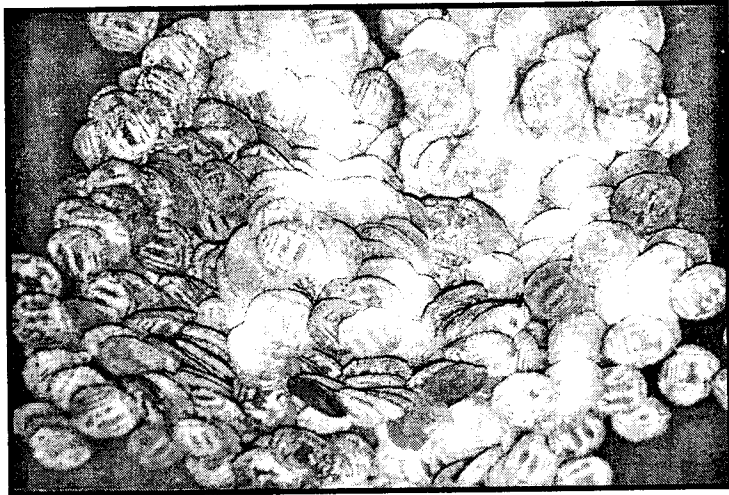
*Roman coins found at Poonagari period – A.D. 4<sup>th</sup> century*



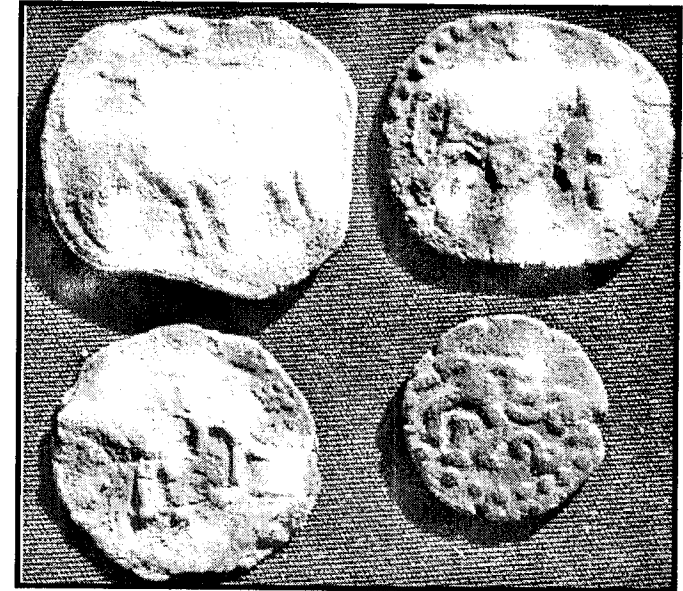
*Coins of the Chola period found at Poonagari*



*The clay pottery pieces found at Poonagari. These are more than 2,500 years.*



*The Tamil coins found at Naga country between 10 – 12 A.D.  
Naga Country - Areas North of Anuradhapura*



*Tamil coins at Naga country between 6 - 10 A.D*

#### 04. Economy and Industry

“Planning is the best form of state intervention in economic affairs”  
- Dr.R.Balakrishna

The Jaffna man has a sense of humour. He laughs more at himself than at others. Even in the most crucial situation, his sense of humour is buoyant. About the economy and industry in Jaffna, he says laughingly. “It is money order economy and “Education is the only industry”. There is some truth in the saying. All those young men who joined government clerical Service during the British rule, went on transfer from Station to Station while the family stayed put in Jaffna, to educate, the children. The head of the family would send a major part of his salary by money order to his family. The Mission schools set up by the Christian Missionaries in the Peninsula afforded the best of education to the youth, so much so that students from the South, as well as the East flocked to the Peninsula for the sake of a good sound education. This basically was the industry of Jaffna referred to.

“A sound and strong economic foundation, which does not need foreign crutches, is of the utmost importance to our country. Our very existence as a great nation depends on it.” J.J.Singh

J.J.Singh spoke of India. But this may apply to Ceylon too. By way of economy, Jaffna had many resources, both on land and sea. There was elephant trade even during the time of the Dutch. They were brought to Jaffna from places like Mannar, the Vanni and from the jungles of Matara and Hambantota. The elephants were captured and brought and

sent by boat to India for the use of the Maharajahs. There were brokers for this purpose.

Thimmarasa Nayakan and Don Philip Sangarapillai were the brokers. Due to some battles in India, there was disruption of the elephant trade. Paddy, plants used as dyes, cotton, horse trading at Delft, Pearls and conch shells, Salt, Palmyrah, corals and similar stones were the items that brought economic gain to the Peninsula. That was centuries before. Now, there are other means to improve the economy of the land.

With aid from Ceylinco Insurance, Fowl runs, cattle farming and small industries - handicrafts were set up.

Ornamental items from Palmyrah leaves and consumer goods from the palmyrahs, Kitchen equipments like winnowing pads, mats shopping bags were made and sold. Beams in house building and fences were also from the palm. In fact from the root to the crown the palm is useful to man.

Agriculture, vegetables, grains, maize, pulses were cultivated.

For paddy cultivation, bank loans and other financial aids were also given by Ceylinco Insurance.

Fruit plants like grapes, mangoes were also cultivated.

The opening of the A9 is also a factor that helped the trader in transporting his goods to the South.

With the opening of A9, local tourists flocked to Jaffna and to

accommodate the continuous flow of visitors from the South, guest houses sprang up here and there and enterprising youth are managing them.

Electricity helped in the growth of small industries.

Fishing Industry is starting to prosper. Apart from all these, even self - employment among refugees - needle work, handi-crafts were encouraged. Being both persevering and industrious, the people of Jaffna making use of the present cessation of hostilities, are taking wide strides to progress.

Besides, the advancement in the economic situation, they turn their attention to the temples repairing and re-opening the temples closed all these days due to the war situation. The temple is part and parcel of his life.

Where industry is concerned late Mr.G.G.Ponnambalam (Snr) mooted several large industrial ventures, when he was minister. The K.K.S.Cement factory, the Paranthan Caustic Soda Chemical Factory and the Valaichanai Paper Factory in the East.

He further helped fisher folk in Jaffna by putting up ice- factories which were a most wanted need, and all these are a monument to his "Diligence and fore - thought". He did all these when he was appointed Minister of Industries, Industrial Research and Fisheries in 1948.

As for the economy of Jaffna, the man himself is economical in his day-to-day life, industrious and persevering, and come peace will contribute much to the development of Jaffna.

### **05.(i) Culture, Caste - Thesavalamai (The Law of the Land)**

Culture of South India was imported along with the migration into Jaffna. Religion and the Arts are followed here as in South India so are Music and Dance, Saivaism supported by the sixty three realised saints of Tamil Nadu has influenced the Jaffna Tamils to a great extent. In the fifties, dance was taboo for girls from orthodox and conservative homes in Jaffna. Music, Carnatic music was much appreciated by the elders, and almost every house was visited by music masters whether vocal or instrumental - to teach the young ones. No child, girl or boy went out for tuition those days. The teachers visited the homes. Invariably in the evenings sound of music will be heard in every home.

Little by little, dance also crept into the homes, and very soon Bharatha Natyam was taken up by girls of conservative families as well.

Before this, there was nautch dancing in temples during festival times. That was frowned upon by the elite of Jaffna. Perhaps that was the reason, why parents hesitated to teach dancing for girls. Nautch dancing has been stopped and Bharata Natiyam and Carnatic music both performed and dedicated to the Gods, made welcome.

On conservatism, Sir C.V.Raman says, "Up to a certain point, the conservatism bred by age may even be useful as a brake on wilder flights of youthful imagination".

This is wisdom of the ages.

Though Music and Dance culture were brought in lock - stock and

barrel from South India, there are some folk plays known as Nattu Koothu, indigenous to Jaffna.

The Jaffna people are ever so grateful to Professor Vithianandhan for reviving this art. In Nattu Koothu, there is acting and dancing interspersed with dialogue. These forms of art depicted the customs and manners of the people, as well as their social life. At one stage, during the colonial era, the sophisticated society rejected it. Due to the efforts of Prof. Vithianandhan, these were made 'Modern' and "respectable".

These Koothus or folk plays were based on folklore as well as on mythology - and Hindu epics and pooranas too. Kaman Koothu tells of the mythical story of Lord Siva burying Kaman - the god of love.

Kathavarayan Koothu tells of the heroic life of Kathavararayan. Then there are dances of episodes from North Indian stories called Vadamodi dance and those from South India and indigenous themes were/ are known as Then modi dances. They are all in vogue even today. The dress as well as the dance forms and music are different. Then modi is supposed to be more ancient than Vadamodi.

Then modi dances were based on Hindu themes and after the advent of Christianity, themes were Christian stories.

Street dramas or Theru koothu were frequently performed in South India. This was performed on an arena in the center and the spectators sat on the ground. The actors moved in a circle so that all could see them. Not only the village in which a koothu goes on, but even people of neighbouring villages were invited to the occasion.

All these Nattukoothus take place late in the night and go on till the wee hours. People enjoy the performance - and come home drunk with - ecstasy at the koothus, performed by great artistes.

## 05 (ii) Caste

"And through out history, this stratification into castes continues"

- H.G.Wells.

This abominable system came into existence due to misrepresentation of the facts of Varnachramadharama. Lord Krishna says each individual according to his position in Varnachram, must do his duty conscientiously. It is Krishna who also said "Corruption of caste is gate way to hell". Verily so. A Kerala writer says people who lived along the sea-shore (karai) were called Karaiar - and those further interior who did velanmai (farming) called Vellalar. There was no rigidity about this rule. If those along the shore, move to the interior and take to farming they become vellalar.

However the various divisions of caste also came here from India. Varnachrama Dharma compares the various divisions to the human body. In the analogy, the head is the scholar Brahmin. Learning was only for the Brahmins. Then the chest - the Shaktriyas - Royals. They were the warriors who protected the state. The abdomen the Vanigar - Traders who collected wealth and property. The Sudhras - the feet - who did menial work for the other three. The Sudhras were further divided and sub-divided according to the occupation of people - for example - those who were pallakku (palanquin - sivige) carriers were chiviars gold smiths- thattar and so on with the Vellalas on top. The roads, Thattatheru,

civiya heru - Chetty Street are so named because of this. Not educated enough to know the dignity of labour – people averred moving with or among other castes.

Long before – there was slavery and Kothadimai (bought) slaves system. Family heads owned their own slaves. It was the British who abolished slavery. But feudalism and serfdom continued till the disruption of normal life in Jaffna after 1983. Perhaps and hopefully this cursed system has met with natural death. Those born to a particular occupation should accept their birth and perform their duties righteously. That was Varnashrama Dharma. This was strictly due to the influence of Ariyans.

#### **05. Thesawalamai - (Law of the Land)**

“The Thesawalamai is a collection of customary laws, codified and applied by the Dutch, in the early eighteenth century. It embodies the traditions and values which were crystalized under the Tamil kings of the Jaffna.

- Dr.S.Pathmanathan

I was fascinated by this law of the land from the time I came to know of it.

A neighbour of ours who was leaving Jaffna for good, wanted to sell his house and property. He first offered it to my father to buy it and then he asked other senior residents down the road. When I asked my father about it, he said, he should sell it only to a person accepted by the neighbours. A misfit would upset the equilibrium of the area. That was Thesawalamai.

But now due to destabilised life in Jaffna, scant respect is shown to Thesawalamai and properties are sold to any one who takes one's fancy, ignoring Thesawalamai. It is indeed a sad situation.

Coming to Theswalamai, we could see that Tamils have developed a social structure and cultural traditions which have embodied all their treasured customs.

It is very difficult actually to trace the origin of this system of law. But this law has prevailed in North Ceylon for several centuries. Customary laws means, 'Customs' to be a source of law which comprises of legal rules which were not promulgated by any legally constituted authority, but which really arose from popular usage and opinion and which by the effusion of time, receives the sanctity of law.

“When the Dutch settlement in Ceylon were ceded to the British, Regulation No.18 of 1806, was issued declaring the code of customs commonly known as the Thesawalamai should be considered to be in full force and that all questions between the Malabar inhabitants of the Province of Jaffna or in which a Malabar inhabitant was defendant should be decided according to this code of custom. In 1814 chief Justice Sir Alexandar Johnston got the code translated into English. This translation is the law of Theswalamai now applicable.

-T. Sir Ramanathan

There have been many changes in the custom and many repeals of statute. But like the law of Medes and Persians, the code of Tesawalamai remains unchanged: Mr.T.Sri Ramanathan author of the book

“Thesawalamai” - The laws and customs of the inhabitants of the Province of Jaffna says, “The world has changed. Jaffna has changed. early customs are in disuse now”.

Although slavery was abolished by ordinance 20 of 1844, still the Thesawalamai code gives legal sanction to slavery. Most of its laws are now obsolete and ineffectual.

The Hindu law influenced Thesawalamai greatly. During Immigration from the coromandel coasts of India, the Tamils have been introduced to Thesawalamai. **Dr.H.W.Tambia** in his book. Laws and customs of the Tamils of Jaffna states that there is a close resemblance between the marumakathan law (law of the Malabars in India) and Mukkuwa law, and the Thesawalamai of Ceylon. He concludes all the laws are derived from some customary law prevalent among the ancient Dravidians.

Section 2 of chapter 63 of the Legislative Enactments say,

The Thesawalamai or customs of the Malabar Inhabitants of the Province of Jaffna, as collected by order of Governor Simons in 1706 shall be considered to be in full force.

So it is clear that Thesawalamai applies to the class of persons who come under the category, “Malabar inhabitants” of the Province of Jaffna. Malabar corresponds to the state of Travancore in Western India. Here Malabar refers to Tamils. The Thesawalamai is meant to apply to all Tamils who have their permanent home in the province of Jaffna.

Slavery and caste system existed under Thesawalamai.

It is surprising - but true that as under the Roman Law, so under Thesawalamai also slavery was by methods of enslavement by birth or by purchase.

In both cases persons captured in war became slaves. In both cases the masters had the right to the slaves' services and the slave was his property.

Under both the Roman Law and Thesawalamai a child of a female slave became the property of the master.

When the master allowed the slave to possess the properties, the slave took the produce from such property, but the master could resume possession in certain contingencies.

If an emancipated slave died without children, the master had the right to the freed man's estate. So in Thesawalamai too.

Both laws recognized emancipation. A little more detail of slavery among the Tamils.

The slaves were divided into four castes.

- (01) Koviars - derived from words “Ko- Idayar” meaning cow herds or koyilar - Servants of the Temple.
- (02) Chandars
- (03) Pallas
- (04) Nallavas

The first two were slaves from their origin. Some were sold by parents or friends to others. The Chandars were also like Koviars. They had duties. They were even in Government service.



Nallavars - similar to Palmyrah tree climbers and Pallars menials to Vellalas.

As far back as the fifties these last two groups would come early mornings from their homes, to serve in Vellala homes. If they were Nallavas, they would climb the palm to tap toddy. The Pallars - men or women sweep the compounds. In those days, the properties of sisters and brothers and uncles and aunts and even of great uncles and aunts were adjoining each other. One set of Nallavars and Pallars would only serve that particular family - and they would go from one compound, to the other sweeping the compounds. They would have a meal and a monthly salary.

When Ceylon (then) became a British colony steps were gradually taken to abolish slavery. But there was the economic factor. The depressed classes continued to serve their masters due to economic reasons.

After the abolition of slavery, another evil crept into the Jaffna Society. That was the caste system.

The landed gentry of Jaffna called Vellalas had "Adimais" slaves and "Kudimakkal - surfs - who performed customary services. Mr. Stanley Rice in the : "Asiatic Review of 1929", stated that the caste system was pre- Aryan in origin. The following are the various castes in Jaffna.

- (1) Brahmins
- (2) Vellalar - The farming community (Velanmai)
- (3) The Madapallis - Immigrants and colonists.
- (4) The fisher caste

- (5) The Chiviyars Palanquin bearers.
- (6) The Potter - Manufacturers of earthen ware.
- (7) The washerman - called Vannan
- (8) Barbers Ambaddar
- (9) Kammallars - Carpenters and Iron smiths
- (10) Koviyas -
- (11) Tanakars - ancient elephant keepers
- (12) Nallavars
- (13) Pallars
- (14) Parayas - The drummers
- (15) Turumbas -

The law of Thesawalamai governs marriages too. Age at which a female could marry was fixed at 10. Male at 14. Later altered to 12 and 16. Marriages performed according to Hindu rites have been recognized under British reign. There are certain ceremonies which are essential for a Hindu customary marriage.

But Jaffna man takes an objective view of marriage. It must last. The couple should be happy. There should be no interference. Inter- marriage - sister and brother marrying the sister and brother from another family - satisfies both parties. When a marriage is fixed and all formalities settled, the father of the bride arranges the registration of marriage - a civil marriage - for security reasons. But the couple is allowed to live as man and wife only after the customary Hindu Marriage.

The far sighted man, whom Freud might admire, gives the house

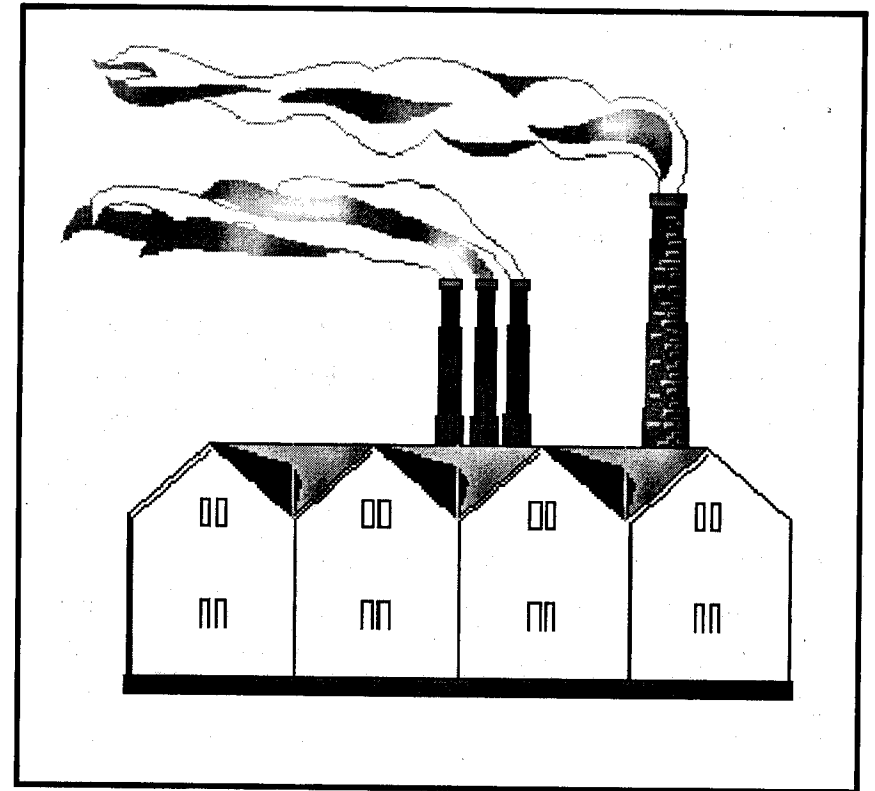
or part of the house as dowry so that the son-in-law could settle down amidst them and attend office. The girl has no fear of in-laws and the man is given right - royal treatment and their married life goes smooth. If the woman goes to live in her husband's home, there would be problems for her. So giving a house or part of it as dowry solves many a problem for the bride.

Under Thesawalamai, there are laws governing guardianship, Laws of property. Inheritance servitudes, law pre-emption, Laws of obligations - and also Law of acquired property known as Thedia thettam.

Thus the customary laws laid down by the Malabar inhabitants of Jaffna was recognized and codified by the Dutch. This Thesawalamai makes the inhabitants of Jaffna, lead a civil and disciplined social life. It is Thesawalamai or Tamil country Law.

“Custom is the Principal magistrate of Man's life” Francis Bacon.

### *Industry in Jaffna*



## 5. Agriculture and Fishing

Agriculture is one of the two major occupations in Jaffna. The other being fishing.

Only a little more than one fourth of the Peninsula is arable land. There are dry, wet and garden lands in this area.

Although dry land is infertile, grains like Kurakkan and Ulunthu and some kinds of yams are cultivated there.

Wet lands are found in certain parts of the Peninsula and also in the islands like Delft Kayts and Karaitivu. The grey loamy soil is found here.

Agriculture depends mostly on rain water. Before the on-set of the N.E. monsoon in September, the fields are ploughed and manured. As paddy needs plenty of water, with the first rain paddy grains are sown. During the following wet months the paddy plants grow. This paddy grains ripen during the dry and sunny weather and are ready for harvest in February.

The fields which are irrigated by water from wells are ploughed and manured to cultivate subsidiary crops like chillies, bringals, manioc and plantains.

Tobacco is grown in garden land with red soil. Garden lands lack hunus, so they need to be ploughed and manured well. Tobacco cultivation is said to have been an important industry in Jaffna in the early part of the 21st century. Green manure as well as cattle and sheep dung are used. Seedlings are allowed to grow in nurseries, then transplanted in large plots. The plants are watered regularly in dry weather.

The whole plant is allowed to "quail" (shink), for a day in the hot sun and the leaves are separated, and put in an open shed to wither. After the fermentation, tobacco is smoked over a fire.

After tobacco cultivation, other crops are grown in the same land. This is called rotation of crops. In December chillies are cultivated.

The Jaffna farmer well known for his thrift, prudence, patience and hard work uses every available land by the system of rotation of crops. This helps in the fertilization of the soil.

In between vegetable lots bean creepers are grown. Manioc in between plantains, snake gourds or bitter gourds are planted near fences so that these plants will climb up the fence.

The plants are irrigated from the well waters by using a well-sweep or "Thula". It works like a lever. This is made of a palmyrah trunk which is supported horizontally. The thinner end is over the well. To the thin end a pole or rope is fixed and a bucket at the end of the pole or rope. This is dipped into the well. When irrigating the garden one man will be drawing the water and two men will be atop the long trunk - walking forward and backward when dipping the bucket or drawing the water, like a see-saw. Instead of a bucket a large size basket made of ola leaves - Pattai is used as they need to draw more water. Channels are made in the garden for the water to flow to all the plants.

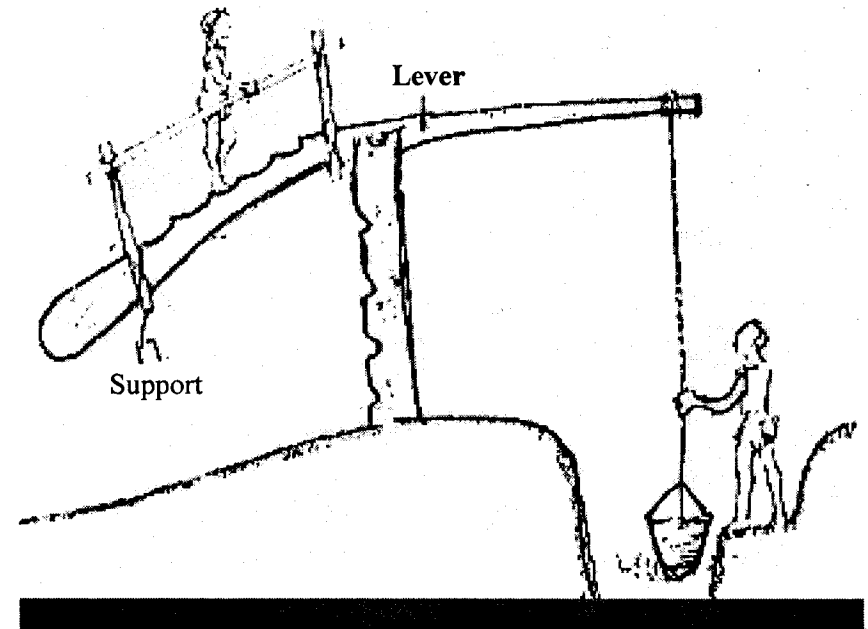
### Fishing

This is the other major occupation. This takes place along the coastal regions. Traditionally kaddumarams were used. These are logs tied together. About five logs are used. This is cheap and as the wood is

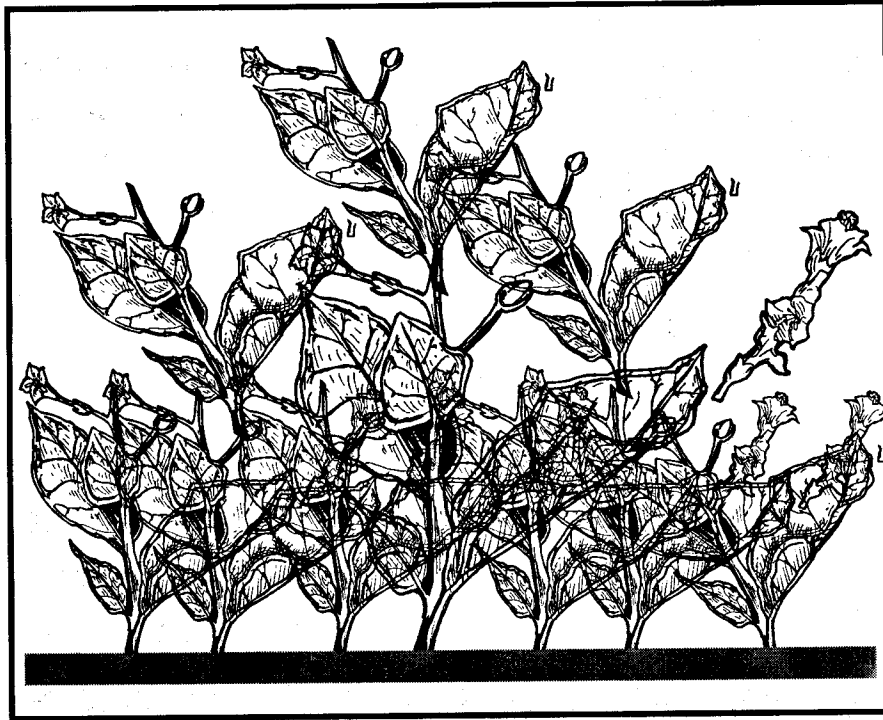
light, unsinkable. It is rowed by hand paddles. Nets are thrown into the sea for the fish - The Kaddumaram floats along with the nets. Many fish are caught in the net.

Deep sea fishing also takes place in Jaffna. Fishermen leave at dusk and remain in the boat till dawn, collect the catch and come back at about seven in the morning.

However the war situation has affected fishing industry too. It has practically ground to a halt - perhaps with the peace move and peace process fishing will start again. They will have good business, for, the fish population would have increased by leaps and bounds- thanks to the war.



Thulla - Well - Sweep



**TOBACCO PLANTS**

## **06. Religion**

“Religion is the opium of the masses” Pearl Buck in “Living Reed”

There were three faiths existing side by side in Jaffna for centuries. Originally inhabited by Hindus- with the Portugese controlling Jaffna, Catholicism was introduced. Then the Dutch brought in the reformed sect and the British Missionaries brought in Protestantism. There was the American Mission - Methodist Anglican and Presbyterian sects. The other group being Muslim followers of Islam, and then the majority Hindus. But Hindus being majority didn't force their faith on others nor did they disrespect and insult other religions. This is perhaps was what made Einstein admire the Hindus, Archaeological findings have shown that there were Tamil Buddhists also. However in course of time, Buddhism moved more towards the South.

In each village the Hindus have built temples and they lived close by. Their whole life was centered around the temple. There were annual festivals and those who were working out of Jaffna annually visit the village to take part in the temple festival. These were like family functions. Of these the Vallipuram Temple of Point Pedro, The Nainativu Amman Temple of Nagadipa, The Dhurgai Amman Temple of Tellippalai, Kandasamy Kovil of Maviddapuram, Sivan Temple of Vannarpannai, The Perumal Vishnu Kovil also of Vannarpannai, the Veeramakali Amman and above all, the famous and prestigious Nallur Temple are very famous. Some temples have the festival for a week or ten days. In Nallur the festival goes on for twenty four days, and the Pooja and

procession in the night would be fascinating. Almost every night after the 10<sup>th</sup> night of the festival, a story from Skantha Puranam was acted. Devotees would carry the deity and make believe the characters of the Puranam. On the last day of Kanthasati - 6 days of fasting for Lord Muruga - there would be the confrontation between good and evil. Lord Muruga and an Asura - an embodiment of evil. The good Lord vanquishes the evil Asura. On the twenty third day is the chariot festival. In the golden carriage the Deity is placed and men vie to hold the massive ropes pulling the 'Ther'. This ceremony is to enable the old and the infirm and the handicapped who would find it difficult to go into the crowded temple to have "Dharshan" of the Lord. The next day's ceremony is "Theertham". After vanquishing the evil, the Lord is taken to purify himself. This is called water cutting ceremony. The last day is Poongavanam. Lord Muruga goes to meet Valli who pines for him. There is spiritual union of the Jeevathma and Paramathma. This philosophy is rather complicated for the lay to understand but it points to the fact that the Lord will accept true devotees and make them one with him. By common consent the Hindus of Jaffna refrain from having any function, especially weddings, during the 25 days.

Hindus believe in Karma and rebirth, "Virtuous and 'Vicious' are not mere terms for talk. Whatever one does one carries its record along" Guru Nanak.

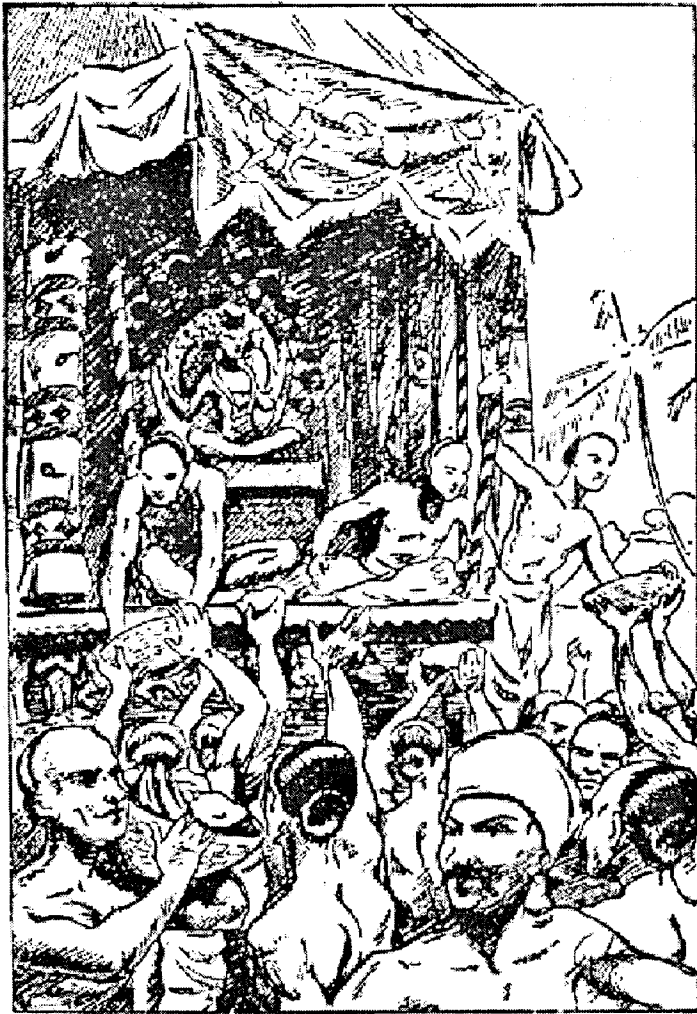
People were able to bear up all that came their way because of this faith. The quiet going, God fearing, law abiding people did much penance and observed rigorous fasts like Kanthesasti, Gowri Viratham,

Pillayar Viratham and so on to fulfil vows or to plead with the Gods to grant their heart's wish. It may sound selffish but the faith is strong. The humility with which the powerful and the mighty enter the temple is proof of man's respect for religion and God.

In birth there are many discrepancies. We have heard cries of "why did this happen to me? Why should we lose our beloved one while others are luckier?" what is luck? luck is the grace of God. People don't stop to think we get what we deserved in life nothing more nothing less. The Potter kneads the clay according to what we give him. It may be karmic soil or soiled karma.

"And strange to tell among the earthen lot some could articulate, while others not"  
-Rubaiyat of Omarkahayam

The Hindu community gives Christianity its rightful place too. During the christmas Holidays those children in Mission schools like Vembadi, Central, Chundikuli, St. Johns, Jaffna College, Uduvil Girls School, Point Pedro Methodist and Hartley, be they christians or Hindus zestfully take part in the X'mas programme. We as students visited the hospital distributing presents to the patients especially in the children's ward giving X'mas cards and spreading the message of Christ. Hindu parents did not protest when their children joined these activities. Both tolerant and broad minded, when carol singers come to their door step at night, some times even, past mid night on X'mas eve, our parents treat them with short eats and soft drinks. Such was life in Jaffna then and the three faiths lived together with humanity bonding them. Children also learnt from adults how to respect another man's religion. That was and is the culture of the Jaffna people.



**HINDU WORSHIPPERS HANDING UP OFFERINGS TO THE  
PRIESTS ON A PROCESSIONAL THER**  
Courtesy - Romantic Ceylon R-H-Basset



***-NALLUR - LORD MURUGA-***

## 7. Festivals

The Hindu society, through out the year has many festivals and religious observances. Most of the festivals are based on Hindu mythology. Some are nature- related. The Tamil New Year begins on 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> of April - Chithirai when the sun enters the Zodiacal home Aries (Medam) after the vernal nox. As this day is based on the Solar Calendar the date remains the same.

After **April New Year**, the Tamils follow the Tamil calendar, for all purposes like marriages and other functions.

New Year traditions are followed to the last letter, according to the instructions given in the Hindu Almanac. An auspicious hour is set aside for Kaivishesham. At the set time the family collects in the Swami - Arai - shrine room. Father will keep the money on betel leaf along with arecanut and flowers and paddy grains. From mother onwards each member is given this kaivishesam by father. If the paddy grains are an odd numbers, like 3,5,7,9,11 and so on, it is held to be lucky for the recipient.

In the month of **Chithirai**, the full moon day known as Chithirai Pournami is a day of fast and pooja - in memory of our dead mothers.

In Vaikasi (May) is the **Vaikasi Pongal** for Amman.

In the Tamil month **Aani (June)** there is a special day called **Aani Utharam**.

According to mythology on this day, Lord Natarajah performed a special dance for the sake of His ardent devotees who begged for a

'tharsan' of His dance. It is therefore dedicated to Lord Siva and special Poojas are performed in Sivan Temples.

**July - Aadi**- brings rains. So the first Aadi (mid July) is celebrated as Aadipirappu - birth of July - with gusto.

Every Tuesday in the Tamil month of **Aadi** is dedicated to mother Goddess.

(The new moon) - **Aadi Amavasai** is observed in memory of dead fathers - Prayers for their souls to attain Moksha are conducted at home and at temples.

**The Aadi Pooram** - is a special day when Goddess Umadevi - attained age - A day to fast and pray.

In (August) or **Avani** - The fourth day after newmoon is called Vinayaga Sathurthi dedicated to Lord Ganesha. This is the most important of all the days set aside for Ganesha workship.

**Aavani Sathurthasi** falls on the 15<sup>th</sup> day after new moon in the Tamil month of Aavani A day dedicated to Lord Natrajah.

**Aavani Moolam** - There was a saint in Thamil Nadu called Manickavasagar - The king put him in prison for some offence Lord Siva by certain means had him released. The day Lord Siva did so is the Moolam. This day is celebrated in Temples.

All Sundays during the Tamil month of Aavani (August - September) are observed in praise of the Sun God.

Mid September - Mid - October is the Tamil month **Purataathi** (September).



The Saturdays of this month are for the worship of Saturn. If Saturn is not favourable to a person, fasting and prayers to Saturn may lessen the hardships or even be beneficial to the individual.

The nine - nights of Saraswathy pooja are conducted during this month. The nine nights are for Sakthi worship and the tenth day known as Vijayadasami - the victorious Tenth day for Mahishasura Marthini - the Goddess bestowed with the joint power of the Goddess Dhurga, Laksmi and Saraswathy. She vanquished the demon of ignorance Mahishan . On Vijayadasami day, children start learning the alphabets. Those who want to learn the fine arts also start the lesson on this auspicious day. That is their 'Vidya Arambam' beginning of learning.

The day after Vijayadasami starts the Kethara Gowri fast or Gowri **Viratham**, which lasts from one new moon to the next one. This is an extra special one observed to invoke the blessings of mother Goddess.

The Mahalayam - in the month of **Purattathi** (mid -Sept-Mid-Oct) falls at the end of the new moon. This is dedicated to our fore fathers. Offerings are made and the poor are fed in the memory of all the dead ancestors, so that their souls will attain moksha.

Aipasi - (mid- Oct-Mid November) is an auspicious month. The Fridays of this month are of special religious significance.

Deepavali falls in this month. Much has been written on the mythological story relating to Deepavali. In simple terms it is the victory of good over evil. The day lord Vishnu (embodiment of all that is good) vanquished Narashasuran - (embodiment of all that is evil)

The day after Deepavali, the six days of **Kanthasashti Viratham**

starts. These six days are for the worship of Lord Muruga - Skanda.

People who observe this rigorous fast - do not take solids for six days. The days are spent on praying.

October is followed by (November) - **Karthigai** (mid November - Mid December)

**Karthigai Vilakeedu** - has a mythological background. The Devas prayed to Lord Siva who granted them many boons. They, drunk with their new powers forgot Lord Siva. To destroy the ego (ignorance) in them, Lord Siva appeared before them in the guise of an old man, planted a fibre in a place and asked the Devas to pull it out. None of them could do it. As they stared at the old man in amazement, he disappeared, and in his stead, stood Lord Siva. This full moon day is celebrated by lighting lamps in the home and outside symbolising enlightenment - (gnana)

There is a day in Karthigai, set aside for the worship of Lord Ganesha who vanquished a demon of ignorance, called Gajamukatharan. The Mondays in the month of Karthigai are dedicated to Lord Siva. It is called Somavaram. The week of Siva.

(mid December - mid-Jan) is the Tamil month of **Margali** - (December).

This month is supposed to be the dawn to the Devas. Devotees sing devotional songs in praise of Lord Siva and also of Lord Vishnu in the respective Temples.

(Mid Jan- Mid February) is **Thai** - the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the Tamil Calendar.

Thai pongal falls on the 1<sup>st</sup> day January 14/15 of the **Thai month**

On the full moon day of Thai comes **Thai Poosam**. This is celebrated by the Hindus in Singapore and Malaysia very grandly.

The new moon in the month of Thai is also a day of religious significance.

**Maasi** (mid - February - mid - March). The eleventh month in the Tamil calendar brings Mahasivarathiri a night set aside for the all night worship of Lord Siva.

**Maasi Maham** - another special day of religious significance.

There are 24 star galaxies mentioned in the Almanac - Maham, Utharam , Poosam, Moolam are some of them.

**Panguni** the Tamil month is from (mid - March to mid - April).

The Panguni **Utharam** is the day when Uma took an avathar as the daughter of the king of the mountains, Malai Arasan.

As a devotee of Lord Siva in this avatar, she fasted and prayed to him to take her as His consort again.

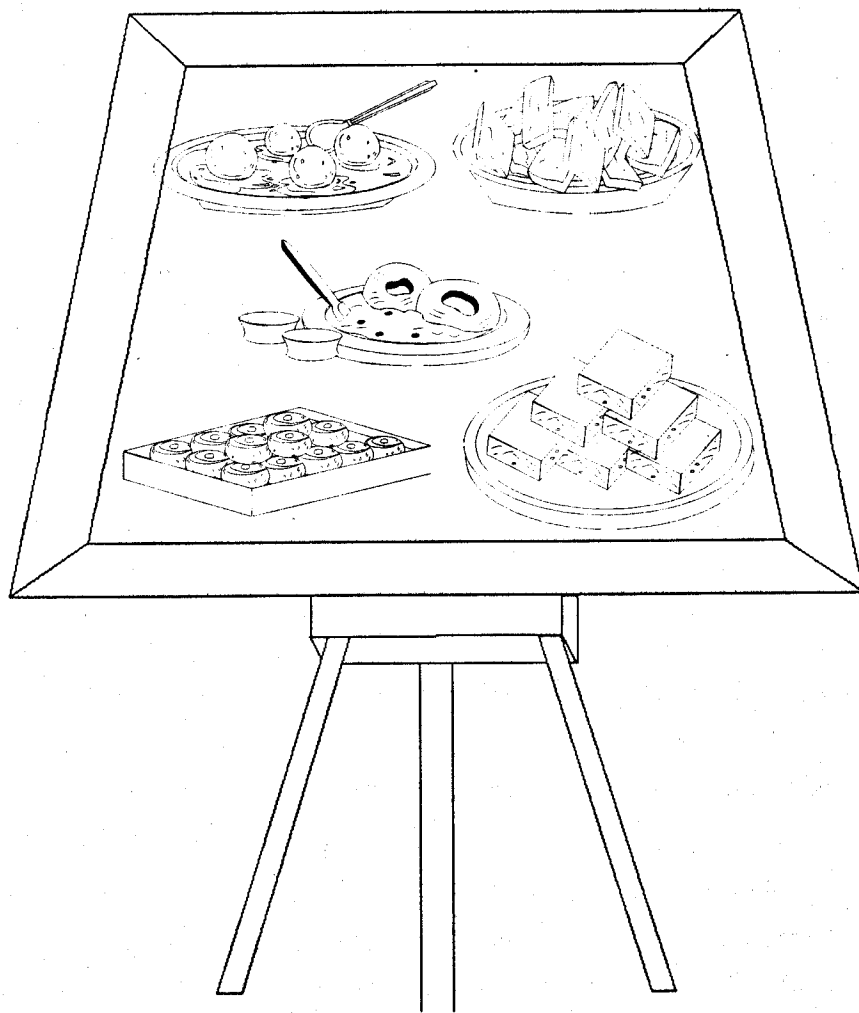
All Mondays of the month of Panguni are dedicated to the worship of the Goddess.

So, the Tamil calendar with the twelve months, has at least one religious function per month.

These are integrated in Tamil culture, followed for centuries.

During all these festivals and days of religious significance mentioned, the family visits the temple to worship and to offer food items- varieties of sweet meats called mothakam, kolukkaddai with fillings of boiled greengram mixed with jaggery and coconut are prepared.

Breaking of coconuts at temples as well as during functions has significance related to the athma soul. The soul is pure but after birth it is surrounded by impurities such as ego - ignorance and delusion and deeds (karma). The green leathery coat of the coconut symbolises delusion, the mesocarp of fibers - karmic deeds and the hard nut - the ego. When ego is broken what is found is the pure soul. This is dedicated to the Gods. That is the philosophy behind the breaking of coconuts. Never in Hindu scriptures it is said that coconut broken at temples is to wish ill of another.



*Sweet - meats - for festivals*

## 8. Life Style

“The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge”  
Bertrand Russell.

From house to house it was a simple stereo - typed life, shuttling between temple, home, school and contributing to a peaceful socially conscious society. Whatever the function be it child birth, funerals or anything else, health and hygiene come first. After child birth for one month, the mother and child are isolated in a room which has a door leading out. She doesn't come into the house, a compulsory rest for a month. On the 31<sup>st</sup> day after the birth of the child, the house is washed and cleaned and the Brahmin priest comes home to perform the cleaning ceremony. It is after this that the blood relations of the mother go to the temple.

Even after a funeral, for one month, only close relatives eat in the home. In the tropics, a dead body putrefies at a rapid rate and viruses and other germs may find their way and infection by food, water or even contact is certain. The germs may be contagious. Those who eat there may be carriers of germs. So in the name of religion it is an enforced quarantine. They usually do not go to crowded places like the temples. In local tongue it is called “Thudaku”. I cannot think of an English equivalent for this. On the 31<sup>st</sup> day is held a ceremony called “Anthiaddy”. According to Hindu custom the dead body is cremated. The belief is that when the Athuma leaves the body, the latter becomes an empty cage. By performing certain rites chanting manthiram the dead body is paid due respect and this would please the devas like yama - God of death, Varuna

- of rain and agni - fire, so that they would find another body for the athma according to karma of course.

On the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> Or 9<sup>th</sup> day, the one who did the final rites, accompanied by one or two close relations goes to the cemetery and collects the bones and places them in a "chembu" brass pot containing milk. This is then taken to some sacred river or sea and the contents immersed in the water, wishing that the athma of the person attains Moksha.

During the thirtyone days, in good old days, neighbours, friends and relations keep sending meals all three times. That was the fellowship in the community.

Recently I went to Singapore for a funeral. This custom is followed there too. Relations who came from Malaysia for the funeral said there also it is followed. This humanitarian cult has crossed the seas to stayput in Singapore and Malaysia.

The home or family is everything for the people of Jaffna. When children go out for higher education and jobs take them out stations, family get together are organised during all festival days starting from Thaipongal in January, the whole family assembles that day. The milk rice, sweetened with jaggery is cooked in the quadrangle. At the North East corner. Men (farmers) only take the lead in the ceremony. The cooked food is offered on plantain leaves for the sun - who made the grains ripen.

It is actually a way of saying thank you to the Sun. The next day is "Patti Pongel". Pongal for the cows and goats.

The sheds are cleaned and the cows and goats garlanded. This happens in the evenings. The fire is lit and milk rice is cooked in the shed. The cooked rice is then fed to the cows and goats.

That is also a way of extending their gratitude to their dumb friends.

Then in February or March comes Sivarathiri. A night devoted to Lord Siva. Temples have poojas every three hours till day break, from 6 p.m onwards and have musical programmes and bhajans, So everybody keeps up.

Following this is the Thamil Puthandu - The Tamil new year in April. Later with the advent of Christianity January 1<sup>st</sup> was celebrated as New year by the X'tians and the Hindus continued with the April New year.

This perhaps has led to the Tamil New Year being referred to as Hindu New Year, which is a misnomer. A University Professor from the South once wrote that earlier the Sinhala New Year was celebrated in March and the Tamil New year in April and that the Kandyan king merged the two to have one New Year in April so from that day the two communities have a common New year. We could address the Jan 1<sup>st</sup> New Year as International New year and the one in April as National New year.

In every month there is a special day mostly religious. All this is given in a separate chapter.

Then there was a frightening "Kudukudupai Karan". A gypsy like person who is supposed to meditate at a cemetery and then beating the

(uduku dumbel), coming from the cemetery at midnight where he had spoken to the spirits. He would stop at every house saying the good or bad things that may befall the household.

People come out quietly and without switching on the light listen silently to this fortune teller. He would move from house to house. It was indeed a frightening experience, for the children.

When there is prolonged drought the villagers think it's due to a heinous sinner - Kodumpaavi - men dressed as women, drag a small enclosed wooden cart with black effigy of the sinner - it could be anyone. Beating on their chest and lamenting, 'Kodum Paavai sahalo, Kodimalai Peiyatho? won't this sinner die- and won't there be a torrential rain? As soon as the cry is heard everybody rushes to see this procession and watch with wonder. People give them some money as they reach each home. This was fun watching. I cannot remember whether there was any rain after these people took the effigy to the crematorium and cremated it.

The affluent families book "Madams" or Pilgrims Rests at Keerimalai during the April Holidays. Families could stay there, cook and eat. So all the kitchen equipment all pots and pan and plates and, raw food stuffs were packed and transport being by bullock cart - bags of these provisions were hung under the cart and the journey from Jaffna town to Keerimalai took almost half a day. It was a lovely holiday with daily baths in the tanks and then to the temple there before meals. Only a week before schools reopen do the families return.

Those were days of such enjoyment. The horse carriage or bullockcart rides were a novelty. Those have long since given way to motorcars.

And then the "iron horse" that came prancing from Colombo whistling shrilly was a wonder for a long long time, to the wide eyed children of Jaffna. This never ending wonder ceased to be a wonder when the droning plane made its appearance on the horizon.

There is another aspect of the simple life style of these people of Jaffna. Anyone who does well in life, out of the goodness of his heart helps a poor relation either financing the education of the person or even giving a considerable sum as dowry. There were people who used to get down a sick person to Colombo, keep him in their own home and give him medical treatment. The wife and children also co-operate, not only co-operate they also learn these habits and in their turn extend their help to the needy.

If the parents could afford to educate only the eldest child, then he/she in turn work and help educate the next in line and so the trend continues. Young boys especially those who have found their way to Middle East or the Western countries work hard and send money to the parents. Many have got houses built for their parents, educated their siblings, and even dowried their sisters. They make all these sacrifices for the sake of the love kindled in the hearth by their loving parents, especially the mother.

So the family plays a great role in these acts of humanity. God be praised !

It is a family established on the solid rock of human faith that finally contributes to the well being of the society. So on this foundation of good, steady, God - fearing and law abiding family life, was built a stable society which alas has been destabilised the past twenty years or so.

But tarry, though destabilised they have not lost faith in their guardian deities. Some fall down, roll over and cry at the debris found where there has been a sacred structure - a temple It is heart rending to see the lamenting of these devotees. War and destruction has wrought only untold misery for these stricken people - but they have not lost their moral or morale. Their set jaws and glassy eyes show their determination to rise from the ashes like the mythical phoenix and soar as high. They will, by all means they will!.

There are many instances to illustrate the for bearance and sense of humour even under the most trying circumstances and the gravest of occasions.

It was after the first ever communal riots in 1958. There was a concert at Jaffna Central College (if I am not mistaken) It was a variety entertainment and one item had the riots as the theme.

The scene is the Railway Station. The Tamils are coming by train and the near and dear collect at the station to receive them. There are a lot of hugs and sobs and one old father has come to see if his son is there. He keeps peeping into each compartment finally spots his son. Wiping his tears he greets him. The son has brought a heavy object well wrapped in a sack. When the father opens the sack he finds a grinding

stone. Why did you bring this of all the things? The father queries and the son answers, "This is the only thing they left behind" to ripples of laughter spreading in the hall!

After the 1983 holocaust , when people were discussing the sufferings of the Tamils in a neighbouring country where 75% of the teaching population were Sri Lankans, one Sri Lankan Teacher from the South seemed to have commented. "Oh they" (meaning the Tamils) will eat dhal and buth and make up" It was an unkind cut though may not be the unkindest, especially coming from the teaching community. I have heard harsh comments flung at Tamils in buses by the drivers and conductors. They couldn't help it as they were cast that way, but to come from an educated one is more than one could stand. Anyway I beg to disagree. Jaffna people don't starve or half starve their children to hoard money Eating habits are well maintained. And food is very much a part and parcel of our culture. Majority being Hindus, only on certain days non vegetarian food is cooked. On Wednesdays and Saturdays. That too after the ceremonial weekly head bath. Gingelly oil is applied from head to toe and after an hour soapnut powder is ground to a paste and applied and the head washed. It is a strenuous bath. A concoction is prepared using pepper, corriander and some other ingredients, and all had to drink it before the meal. This is an important event. Meals were and are never meagre but sumptuous Mother caters to each one's taste. The father may want it one way, the children another. With non-vegetarian food, Curd and ghee are never allowed to mix. Curd and ghee are from cow milk and it is out of respect for the cow, this is enforced. If there is dhal then

plenty of ghee is added to the rice to make up for the vitamins and minerals found in meat and fish. Even in the poorest of homes, there would be a small home garden of vegetables. Parents sacrifice their needs to feed the children. If they eat only dhal and buth, they would not have grown up like potatoes!

They grow steady and strong. If they were not hardy enough could they have had the stamina and determination to study with all the bombing and shelling going on around them?

I believe during the worst of shellings, medical students sat in bunkers and studied with the torch light in hand. Food goes a long way to give them not only physical health but mental health too.

“Mens Sana in corpore Sana”



**SITTING TOGETHER FOR A MEAL**

## 9. Schools

“Essence of education lies in drawing out the very best that is in you”  
- Mahatma Ghandi

Diogenes, a 4<sup>th</sup> century Greek Philosopher who founded the Cynic school of Philosophy, said (though not cynically)

“The foundation of every state is the education of its youth”

Sure enough the youth of Jaffna in the very past, the recent past, the present and may be the future too, who were, are and will be educated, had been are and would be the very foundation of Jaffna.

Jaffna prides herself over the schools there. To start with Jaffna Hindu College founded by the Hindu Board in 1890, stands majestically over looking the K.K.S. Road, This Institution that has produced many leading personalities like the late Mr. Balakrishnan, Magistrate and many other scholars and community leaders is still turning out scholars and leaders to serve the community, along with Parameswara College founded by Sir P. Ramanathan in 1921 and the sister schools Jaffna Hindu Ladies College established in 1943 and Ramanathan College for Girls established in 1913 by Sir P. Ramanathan.

Jaffna man, knowing the worth and value of education gave lavishly in cash and kind towards educational Institutions. Most schools are supported by parents and maintained at a high standard. In this respect, the Mission schools did great service to the students who entered their Portals. Many Hindus rushed to put their children in these Mission schools, mainly for the discipline there.

Jaffna Central College and Vembadi Girls' High School, St. John's College and Chundikuli Girls' High School, Jaffna College, Udvil Girls Collge and Point Pedro Hartley College and Methodist College, St. Patricks' College and Holy Family Convent are sister schools established by the Missionaries.

All these schools have turned out scholars of repute. Doctors, Physicians, Teachers, Accountants, Engineers, Civil Servants and Legal luminaries Business tycoons not to mention famous Scientists who were and are a pride to the land.

The schools I mentioned are in the town or in the outskirts of the town. But every village has its famous school to boast of whether Mission Schools or Hindu Board Schools. Scholars and leaders have been produced by schools in the interior too I am unable to name them as I am not familiar with them.

Most of these schools have celebrated a century of service, and the people are grateful to these Mission Schools which have produced men and women with scholarly acumen who have gone forward in the world with the stamp of their Alma mater.

There was interaction among the schools and all schools corporated when inter School competitions were organised by the state.

Many who have proceeded with higher studies have joined the staff of their Alma mater to serve her. No offer of any other promising job has lured them away from their school. The gratitude was of such magnitude.



### Some notes on American Missionaries in Jaffna.

The American Missionaries had no intention to Anglicise Jaffna Society. Macaulay was of the opinion that oriental culture and studies were an impediment to modernisation - which meant Westernisation. The objective of American Missionaries on the other hand was fundamentally different from Macaulay's view.

These Missionaries who belonged to the eighteenth century liberalism did not want to destroy the values of Traditional culture. But they did finally believe that only through English education, could the native society be sufficiently enlightened. They could discern that education in the native language could not benefit the Jaffna society. They felt that the unacquaintance of the Tamils to English Education was the cause for the lack of mental and intellectual development. But they did recognise the antiquity of Tamil language which ranged with Greek, Sanskrit and Hebrew. But they could not familiarize themselves with Tamil Literature which they thought was of high quality; neither could they mix and move with men of learning or scholarship. Naturally Tamil scholars did not want to have any contact with the Missionaries. The Missionaries could not get Tamil texts. In course of time they gained some knowledge about Tamil Literature.

Daniel Poor, who got to purchase some manuscripts in Tamil after 13 years in Jaffna had in 1835 a chance to study "Agatiar Padal. He expressed a high opinion of this work. Said Daniel Poor of Agastiyar.

"He is said to be one of the most learned of the Tamil race .....

I regret very much that I did not come into possession of his songs until very late, as several of these convey sentiments strictly in unison with the doctrines we preach".

Of Thrrukural, H.R.Hoisington, Principal of the Batticaloa seminary (1836 – 1849) had this to say.

"The Kural is one of the most eminent moral poems of India. It contains the chief doctrines of the vedas. This we design as the highest Tamil classic".

The Missionaries drew up a scheme of studies. They gave pride of place to Tamil.

Their observation about Tamil is, "**The Tamil Language like the Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek etc. is an original and perfect language and is in itself highly worthy of cultivation**".

So they cultivated the knowledge of the Tamil language, and imparted to the Tamil youth a sound knowledge of the English Language.

The earliest stations established by the American Missionaries were in Tamil land. They established themselves in Jaffna hoping to evangelize the entire society.

They were also of the view that christianity should be indigenized. Therefore they trained men and women to write and conduct discourses in Christianity in Tamil.

They also planned to raise indigenous clergymen through their scheme of education by 1833, the Missionaries found that the students of

Jaffna had developed a great interest in English education. But the missionaries were keen on cultivating Tamil studies for two reasons. One, to acquaint themselves with the principal texts in Tamil Literature and the other to command the respect of the local population, with a sound knowledge of its literacy and cultural tradition.

Recommendations of the Cole Brooke commission (1833) regarding education provided the necessary impetus to the learning of English Language. This led to the neglect of Tamil studies.

The political conditions in the island in 1923 were unfavourable to the American Missionaries as Edward Barnes, the Governor was hostile to them and did not sanction their establishing a college. He also imposed a ban on the arrival of American missionaries, who could not find competent teachers. The few missionaries who were there before Barnes was appointed Governor, conducted the teaching programme.

Daniel Poor was at Tellippalai, Miros Winslow and Levi Scudder were at Uduvil, Wood Ward was at Manipay; John Scudder was at Pandatherappu; and Neighs was at Vaddukoddai.

The fact remains that the American Missionaries desired to spread Protestant Christianity and convert those saivaites who were willing. Yet they served the society by educating the youth of Jaffna. To do so they established educational institutions like Jaffna college at Vaddukoddai, and Uduvil Girls college and similar ones at other places. Besides they have openly admired the Tamil language, literature and the culture and tradition of Tamils.

“Gratefulness is a quality which should never be overlooked, if we want to raise ourselves in the world” R.K.Murthi.

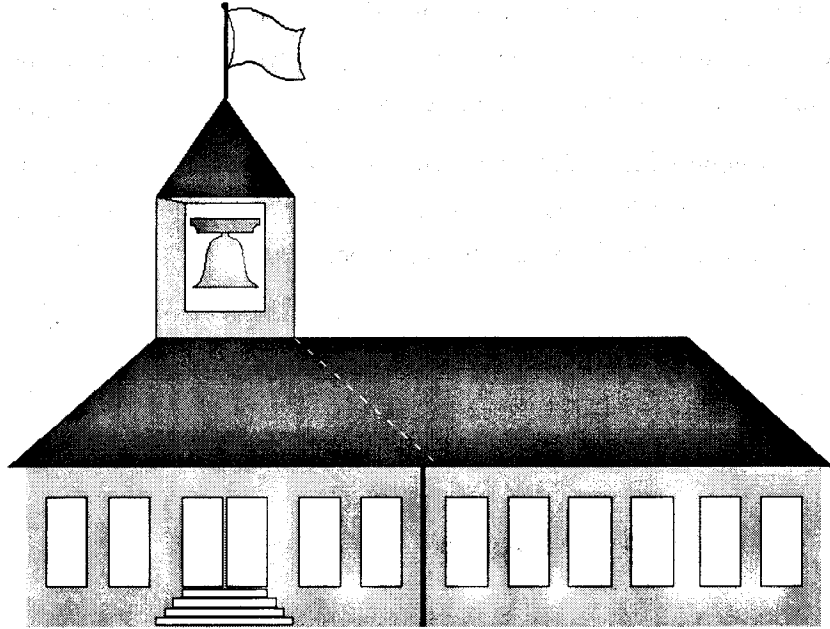
These schools still stand as a lasting memory to the service rendered by Missionaries to the Jaffna population. They still have name and fame. It is amusing that sometimes during marriage proposals too, the parties liked to know from which school the prospective bride or groom comes. People had such respect for the schools.

A good educational background is very necessary not only in seeking a partner but also in seeking a job. A person from one of the prestigious school is favoured for a job too.

“The ink of the Scholar is more sacred than the blood of martyr.

- Prophet

## SEAT OF LEARNING



## 10. Sports and Games

It was never a case of “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” in Jaffna, sports and games are organised by the youth as a means of recreation.

A part from Sports Meets organised at school level, there are many games and competitions in the day-to - day life of the children of Jaffna.

A game called kiddi is a favourite game of the children. A small dent is made on the ground with a diameter of about 3”- 4”. A small stick about 3”- 4” is placed across it. The player holds a long stick about 1 1/2 feet and keeping it below the small stick in the dent, heaves it hard with all his might. The small stick called pullu could be caught. If so the striker is ‘out’ and leaves the long stick - kiddi for the next in his team. If he is not ‘caught’ the player measures the length of the kiddi from the dent and keeps it behind the dent - The fielder who picks up the ‘pullu’ throws it from that spot to strike the kiddi. If he succeeds the striker is out. If not, the fielders try to throw the pullu into the dent. The striker can hit - it and then measure the distance between the dent and the pullu. If the fielder throws the pullu within a radius of the length of the kiddi, the striker is out. They should aim at getting 100 points.

Kite flying is called Paddam vidal. This is enjoyed during the windy month April - August.

Kilithattu or Thaychi is a very vigorous game. Three or four large rectangles are drawn on the sandy ground usually with the foot. A central line is drawn dividing it into smaller rectangles. The players are

divided into two teams. One team by tossing a coin may become the defenders and the other attackers. The defenders stand on the parallel lines - The players in the attack team have to dodge these defenders and try to run across without getting caught to the 'kili' who is allowed to run around all the rectangles - He can run on the lines only - It is a rigorous game which calls for great skill and dexterity.

Kulai eduthal - taking a sprig of leaves or aadu puli aaddam - sheep and tiger game. Two teams take part in it. A small branch of leaves is kept in the middle at equal distance from each team, (about - 50 yards). One person from one of the teams runs up to take the branch while one from the other team tries to prevent - him from taking it.

They play the usual hopscotch that all children around the world too play.

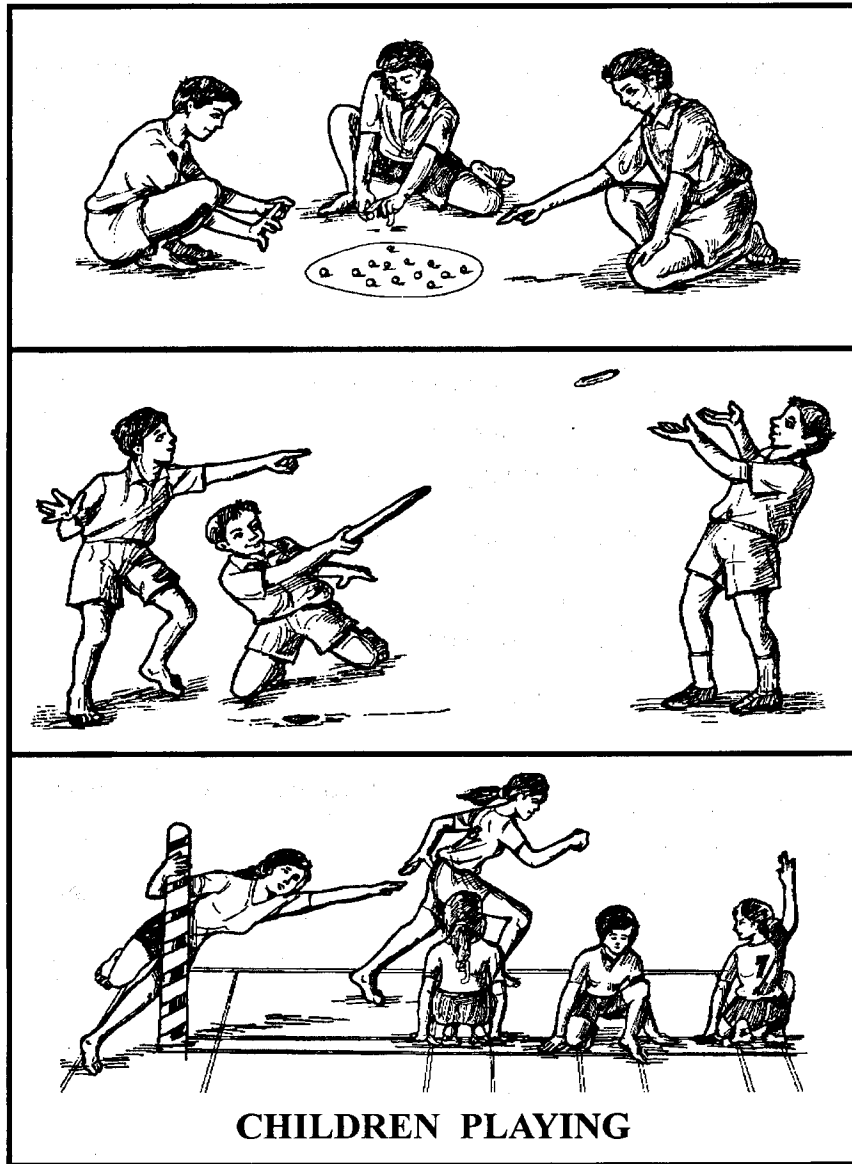
Kapadi is a game introduced recently.

When ever there are Inter School Sports organised, the children have their own sports conducted in their compounds which may be very large about five or six larchams.

During Foot-ball season it is foot-ball, and cricket during cricket season.

Till six p.m. children can stay out, in their compounds or in their relations houses - At six o'clock, all children are called back - washing their faces, hands and legs they go straight to the shrine room they sing devotional songs and pray and then to the study table till dinner.

On full moon nights the children may collect in the quadrangle and sit on mats under a bright moonlight. They spend some time chatting or singing and then keep asking riddles and quiz questions - Adults too join in and the family creates a closeness among members.



## 11. Sons and Daughters of the Soil

“The great never die in the memory of their country” S.N.Sahar

This is a tricky subject. This has to be handled with care. For it deals with the names of the leading personalities of Jaffna. There were intellectual giants, Legal luminaries. Great men of medicine, world renowned scientists, successful Entrepreneurs, Business Tycoons journalists, writers, educationists, musicians , artistes and social workers not to mention Teachers.

The Peninsula is an infinitesimal dot on the map of the world. Yet this very dot has produced out of proportion numerous, eminent, and illustrious sons and daughters.- some of them being world figures.

These personalities hail from all three groups - Hindus, Christians and Muslims. People’s hearts are like glass that is why they are worthy of mentioning. Even if I have left out some inadvertently, I deserve no pardon for hurting the sentiments of a people who pride over these eminent and elite personalities who may be close to them as relation or a friend, so with God above and hope within I try my hand at this, treading deftly sometimes on shaky ground.

Let me start the list with **Yogar Swamigal** like an invocation. This most revered mystic of Jaffna was educated in a catholic Tamil school in Colombothurai and later employed in the stores section of the Iranamadu Irrigation scheme in 1907 – 1922.

When he came in contact with **Sellappah Swamigal** a hermit

whose disciple he became, he wanted to start on a spiritual journey . So he did, giving up his job, and his supervisor , engineer Browns reluctantly allowed him to go in his search for Truth. He renounced everything and commenced a spiritual life. He became a great mystic venerated by many. Thousands of devotees flock to get his “dharsan” in the little hut of his. His sayings are all compiled under “Natchinthanai” - good thought. He passed away in 1964 but his spiritual influence remains. I would like to mention **Arumuga Navalar**, Tamil Scholar, Patriot, and social reformer and above all a true Saivaite. He translated the Bible into Tamil.

The Sri Lankan Government honoured him by issuing a commemorative postage stamp value 5cts on 29/11/1971.

There was another mystic called **Guru Baba** at Bankshall Street. Though he was a Muslim, people of all faiths flocked to his ashram.

I go on to mention Father **X.S.Thani Nayagam** who was the founder of the “International Association of Tamil Research” He was from Delft. In his speech “Research in Tamil studies” delivered in English, he reminded the people of their great cultural heritage and uttered a beacon call to generations to come, and concluded “Under God may the future be even more glorious than the past”. He did all he could to put Tamil and Tamils in the International forums.

If there had been and are famous personalities who have brought fame and name to the land of their birth, it is most appropriate to say a word of praise to the hand that sent them to fame that is that of the

teachers. Jaffna is teeming with teachers.

The teachers’ community is so wide that I cannot possibly mention these masters of the profession by name. But collectively in my humble way and humble words I salute these teachers who have moulded the lives of all these great men and women, and still continue to do so. They are a remarkable lot, but for their dedicated service, sacrifice, sense of duty, sincerity of purpose and humanity, the Jaffna youth would not have progressed by leaps and bounds in the academic field. From the primary teacher who holds the tender hand of the nursery kid and guides her/him, to the Dons of the University, the stamp of their service is seen all too clearly. The teacher in the words of Tagore, “He is a lamp and unless the lamp is burning, other lamps cannot be lit.”

When talking of the sons and daughters of the soil, those who come to mind are the great stalwarts who peopled the Peninsula like **Sir.P.Ramanathan QC**. A lawyer, legislator Scholar, statesman and a silver tongued orator. On September 4<sup>th</sup> 1975, the Sri lankan Government honoured him by issuing a commemorative postage stamp. Value 75 cts.

**Sir P.Arunachalam** and his son Mahadeva and their progeny **Bakku Mahadeva D.M.Suvaminathan** are leaders of the Hindu Community. Then there was **Mr.G.G.Ponnampalam (Sn)** and his son **Kumar Ponnampalam (Junior)** and **Gajendran Ponnampalam** all in the Legal profession, are outstanding personalities too.

**Mr.S.J.V.Chelvanayagam** called, the “Gandhi of Ealam” was

much loved and respected leader of the Tamils. **Sir Kanthia Vaithianathan** is for ever honoured by the Tamils for rebuilding Thiruketheswaram. I need not elaborate on these senior sires of old who had helped their people out of the goodness of their heart and greatness of their soul.

These deeds did not stop with the senior members of the family. The brilliance continued to the lineage keeping the torch alit.

In the present generation, there are many in the legal profession who have reached great heights. I may mention **Mr.C.V.Wigneswaran**, Supreme court Justice, Although he had been in Trincomalee, he has his roots at Manipay, Jaffna. Next **Mr.Sharvanada** Retd. Chief Justice. **Mr. Ananda Cumaraswamy** Rtd. S.C.Judge **Mr.S.Mahendran** criminal Lawyer, **Mr.Kanageswaran** President's counsel, son of **Senator Kanaganayagam**, and **Mr. S.Sivarasa** also President's counsel, **Mr.N.Sivendran** a young lawyer. He hails from Chavakachcheri. Among the ladies in the profession **Maheswary Velautham** who is at the helm of a N.G.O - Forum for Human Dignity. She is a Human Rights Lawyer, from Point Pedro. **Mala Sabaratnam** and **Yaso Gunaseelan** who have done proud by all of us.

The lawyers list is quite long. I do not have any manuals to pick the names from except, "The Dictionary of Biography of the Tamils of Ceylon" by **Mr.S.Arumugam**. He has of course mentioned those of an earlier generation.

**Sir Waithilingam Duraiswamy**, Advocate, M.L.C.M.S. speaker state council 1936 - 47 had a distinguished lineage descending from

**Seyatunga Ambalavanar**, a famous Pundit and Scholar, whose son was **Iyampillai** whose son was **Ford Waithilingam**. The clan is from Velanai. After the demise of **sir P.Ramanathan**, **Sir Waithilingam** was the leader of the Tamils and partron of many Hindu Institutions. He was one of the Founders of the Tamil Union, and President. He was also president of the Vivekananda Society. He was knighted in 1953.

His second son **Yogendra** entered the overseas service. He was Government Agent Jaffna 1979 - 1981. He was the President of the Hindu Council of Sri Lanka. My father late **Kandavanam Aiyadurai** also was a leading lawyer in Jaffna. He hails from the village of Punnalaikattuwan. My elder brother late **Aiyathurai Sivanandan** was also a lawyer who was puisne Judge in Zambia.

According to **Mr. Arumugam's** text on Tamils of Ceylon, my father took great interest in educational matters and he mooted the establishment of the Public Library in Jaffna.

**Alfred Duraiyappa** popularly known as 'people's Mayor', During his tenure as Mayor of Jaffna, introduced many improvements to the Jaffna Town. He was assassinated allegedly for political reasons in 1975.

Could we forget the scholar, Savant **Ananda Cumaraswamy**? O! What a treasure he was to the Tamil community. Though he was born in Colombo, His father Muthu, later known as **Muttu Cumaraswamy** was the son of gate Mudaliyar **A.Cumarasamy** of Manipay.

**Sir P. Ramanathan** was his grandson so all of them have con-

tributed much to their homeland - Jaffna . They are world famous and so is the lineage. They belong to the whole world. Their position should not be narrowed down to a community.

**Dr. Ananda Kumarasamy** is said to be the most distinguished person of our time.

Another name to be added to the list of eminent lawyers is that of **C. Ranganathan QC**. He was a leading Appeal Court Lawyer from Alaveddi Jaffna. I understand in the famous 'Kodeswaran Case' of 1969, **Mr. Ranganathan QC** was the one who took up this case in the Privy Council. The other Tamil who made a hazardous journey by ship to UK was **Sir P. Ramanathan**, to present the case on behalf of the Sinhalese during the 1915 riots.

The lawyer's list is never ending. And they had not stopped with a ILB. They have been legislative councillors like **Hon.A.Canagaratnam Visuvanathan Casipillai** of whom no other than Leonard Wolf wrote. "One of the leading lawyers a respectable and respected man of Jaffna". So, were many lawyers.

**T.Chellappapillai** of Jaffna was chief Justice in the court of Travancore, Gate **Mudaliyar A.Coomaraswamy** who was Tamil member , first legislative council of Ceylon. He is also the progenitor of two distinguished Tamil family groups.

One **Sir Muthucumarasamy** father of **Dr. Ananda K. Coomarasamy**, and the other **Mudaliyar Ponnambalam** father of **Sir P. Ramanathan. Sir.P.Arunachalam Mudaliyar P.Coomarasamy**

eldest brother of **Sir P.Ramanathan** and **Sir. P. Arunachalam**, J.P.Advocate and member legislative council. He took great interest in founding Jaffna Hindu College in 1890.

**Hon.V.Edirmanasinghe Mudaliyar** was Tamil member, Ceylon Legislative council.

**Mr.C.Thanabalasingam D.J.Point Pedro, Ambalavanar Canagasabai** Advocate and member legislative council, **Kodeswaran** of the famous "Kodeswaran case of 1969,

**V.S.S.K.Kumaraswamy** - B.A. Advocate who later turned an industrialist – in cigar Manufacturing **K.C.Nadarajah K.J.C.** Advocate and Judge of the Supreme court. **S.Nadesdan QC** Senator. His son Satyendra is also an eminent lawyer in U.K. **C.Nagalingam** Advocate acting justice acting governor General. Jaffna had a centenarian also to boast of in the person of **R.Nagaratnam** who was a financial assistant of Malaysia.**C.Suntharalingam** and **C.Nagalingam** were brothers.

As far as possible I have mentioned the names of great personalities in the legal profession.

Coming to the Christian community there were and are many eminent lawyers. The names are not in preference to their ability, but in alphabetical order starting with **C.Britto** District Judge Scholar and Author who wrote Jaffna History. Then on to G. and **R.R.Crossette Thambiah** the former was a District Judge and the latter crown counsel. Solicitor general **Mr.T.K Curtis** – advocate and crown counsel. **Mr.James Joseph** advocate, District Judge who set up a lucrative



practice in Colombo. He is from Suthumalai, Jaffna, **S.J.Kadirgamar** is another of these lawyers.

The **Rajaratnam** brothers T.J. and T.W of Tellippalai were also well known lawyers who ended up as High Court Judge and supreme court judge respectively.

**James Thevathasan Ratnam** lawyer, scholar and philanthropist of Pandaitharippu. He is still well known for his monograph on the "Polonnaruwa colossus (1974) and his lecture on the Tomb of Elara(1981). **Mr.Sam Sabapathy** Proctor has the honour of being the first Municipal Mayor of Jaffna.

**Henry Alexander Patrick Sandrasegar**, an advocate and was a prominent lawyer. He was made a king's counsel, and he was member of the Ceylon legislative Council.

Deshamanya **Dr.H.W.Tambiah**, supreme court Judge wrote many books concerning Law and the Tamils. He was awarded the National honour of Deshamanya" in 1993.

**Dr.H.D.Tambiah** chief Justice was son of **C.R.Thambiah** the Jaffna lawyer. He rose rapidly in the legal profession, to important positions on the Bench.

He was appointed chief Justice in 1992. Another giant of an intellectual was **Dr.Isaac Thambyah**. He was a distinguished lawyer citizen of Jaffna.

**Mr.Vincent T. Thamotheeram** Supreme court Judge who after the 1983 holocaust left -for Down under. Jaffna lost one more of her

precious sons to Australia where he was called to the Bar. From time to time emerged brilliant people in Jaffna. They being mostly professionals have risen to great heights in their field.

Coming to our Muslim brethren in the Legal Rostrum - The first in the field, was the late **Mr.M.C.Abdul Cader**, remarkably known as 'Fez' **Abdul Cader**. Born in the late 19th century in Jaffna, not only was he the first Sri Lankan Muslim to obtain a Bachelor's degree but also the first Muslim Advocate in Sri Lanka who created a sensational precedent during the the Colonial rule.

In 1905, when he entered the High Court with his traditional Fez cap on, the Chief Justice - an Englishman, **Sir C.P.Layard** considered it contempt of Court to appear in the revered precincts of the Court, with a cap on his head and ordered him to remove it, **Abdul Cader** undaunted, refused to do so on the grounds that according to Islamic culture, it was a mark of respect to wear a cap in a place of high esteem and that his attire only manifested the great respect he had for 'His Honour' and the Court. As Sir Layard was not prepared to accept his plea, **Abdul Cader** indignantly walked out with his Fez on.

Thereafter, the whole Muslim Community as well as prominent personalities of other communities rallied round him and ardently supported him to fight for his rights at the Privy Council in England. He ventured to board the ship with his Fez on his head and his prayer mat in his hand. He returned triumphantly to Sri Lanka with his Fez on, to a jubilant crowd of friends and well - wishers who awaited his arrival.

It has to be noted that though he had very good prospects in Jaffna and Colombo, his heart went out to the highly concentrated Muslim brethren in Kathankudy, in Batticaloa living in dire straits. Much against the wishes of his relations and friends, he settled down with his family in Kathankudy. His self - less service was a blessing to Kathankudy.

Another **Abdul Cader** of Jaffna was the eminent Judge of the Supreme Court, who passed away a few years ago, Late **Mr.Aboobucker** was a prominent Muslim lawyer in Jaffna and the proud father of the late **A.M.A.Azeez** who was the first Muslim in the Civil Service and a very eminent intellectual in Sri Lanka.

A prominent Muslim personality is Jaffna - born lawyer **Mr.M.S.Alif** who was the Cabinet Secretary to the late **Hon.Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranayake** who sent him as her special Envoy to the Middle - East to represent her government. After serving as a U.N. Advisor abroad he is now in retirement.

I suppose I have come to the end of this chapter on the legal luminaries of Jaffna phew! how exhausting it had been! I never knew or thought that lawyers were such a tire some lot!!

“Law - an ordinance of reason for the common good made by him who has care of the community”

St.Thomas Aquines

**Dr.V.Ambalavanar** B.Sc Maths PhD economic retired as additional secretary to the President **K.Arulanandhan** of Atchuvveli,

after graduating in science from the Ceylon University, proceeded to Cambridge and obtained his Tripos (Cantab) in soil mechanism.

He joined the U.C. Davis faculty and has distinguished himself in Geo Technical Engineering and is now engaged in the capacity of Engineering Professor.

**Mr.K.S.Arulnanthy** M.Sc was Deputy Director of Education. He was a science Teacher at first and later was appointed Asst. Inspector of School. He proceeded to U.K and obtained London University Teacher's Diploma. On his return he was promoted as Asst. Director and then Deputy Director of Ed.

**Dr.K.Arumugam** B.Sc (Cey) Ph.d (Lond.) senior lecturer city University, London. In London he established S-C-O-T “Standing committee of Tamils” for the welfare of the Tamils.

**S.Arumugam** – B.Sc (Lond) B.Sc (Cey) F.I.C.E Deputy Director Irrigation , Author. He was Director of the Water Resources Board for six years and President of the Institution of Engineers, Ceylon 1966 – 1967. He has published many books. One of which is the Dictionary of Biography of Ceylon Tamils which gives me the information on the great sons and daughters of Jaffna.

**Dr.E.T.Buell**, who worked hard for the success of the Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay. It is a foremost Medical Institution today because of him.

**Dr.V.Buvanendran** - B.Sc (Ceylon) PhD (Edin) served in Nigeria as professor, at the Ahmad Bello University, Zaire, and was Associate

Professor at the University of Zimbabwe 1986- 1989 and then as consultant at F.A.O.

**Gate Mudaliyar N.Canaganayagam, A.I.B, F.R.E.S. J.P. C.B.E.** He entered Banking career and was shroff of British National Bank of India , Nuwera Eliya in 1912. In the Kandy Branch, he had a distinguished career in Banking and politics. He was a member of the Kandy Municipal council in 1973, Deputy Mayor in 1941 and was the first Tamil Mayor of Kandy in 1941. Ceylon Government honoured him with the title of Gate Mudaliyar and the British Government honoured him with C.B.E.

**Dr.J.C.Chinnappa B.E. D.I.C, Ph.D (lond) F.I. Mech. E.,C.Eng.** Prof.of Engineering. After qualifying as Bachelor of Engineering Degree of the Madras University with Honours, Master of Engineering Science, London and Ph.D, he was appointed Lecturer at the University of the Ceylon Peradeniya. Later he was Professor of Engineering, Head of the Department and Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. He served overseas too.

The Rt. **Rev.Dr.B.Deogupillai** the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jaffna held the position of the Bishop with strength and during the days of strife and turmoil in the country was a great solace to the suffering masses.

**Dr.C.J.Elizeer M.A.PhD.,D.Sc** Barrister, Professor of Mathematics, Ceylon, Malasia and Australia. He is a pride to Sri Lankan Tamils as well as to his school Hartley College Point Pedro.

**Brahma Sri Ganesha Iyer** was a great Tamil Scholar the likes of whom is hard to find. He wrote several books in Tamil.

**Sir Chittampalam A.Gardiner** - His name is a house hold word. He was a prominent Business Magnate. An important road in the city of Colombo has been named "Sir C.A.Gardiner Mawatha" in his honour. The Tamil Community, expecially Manipay residents share the pride.

**Rev. Father S. Gnanapiragasar OMI.** His knowledge of sanskrit and Hindu philosophy were his assets. He did research in the History of Jaffna, Philology and linguistics were his forte, He researched on the antiquity of Tamil. He held the view that Tamil was the earliest human speech and that all other languages were derived from the Tamil language. The Sri Lankan Government honoured him by issuing a commemoration postage stamp value 50 cts. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1981.

**A.Gunanayagam Sr. Dep.Auditor, President Eelathu Thiruneri** Thamil manram. He served the Thamil Community in many ways getting actively engaged in promoting the cultural and religious tradition of the Tamils. The Thiruneri Thamil manram of which he was founder President was engaged in upholding the tenets of the Hindu Saiva scriptures.

**K.Gunaratnam** of K/G. Industries is another person who has distinguished himself in the cinema field. He embarked on a variety of business ventures and was one of the most successful business magnates of our times. He was Managing Director - cine sounds sales & services Ltd., Union Carbide Ceylon Ltd.

**Dr.G.R.Handy O.B.C.L.M.S M.D. M.R.C.P (Lond).** He was an

outstanding Physician specially in heart ailments.

**Rev. John Hensman** was the first Tamil Anglican clergymen ordained in Ceylon.

Professor **W.J. Jeyasingam** B.Sc (Lond) M.A. Ph.D (mass) Professor of Geography. He held a leading position in many religious and social institutions in Sri Lanka. He lived in the States from 1984 till his demise in 1989.

**Brahma Sri Kailasanatha Kurukkal** chief High Priest, Nainativu temple. Head of the society of Saiva High Priests. He was an authority on Saiva rituals. He was also well versed in Hindu Saiva Agama.

Professor **Kailasanatha Kurukkal** was professor of Hindu Civilisation, Jaffna University. He was a lecturer in Sanskrit at Peradeniya University 1956 - 1975.

Professor **Kailasapathy** is still well known as the Editor in chief of "Thinakaran". He was an accomplished scholar and a versatile speaker. **V. Kailasapillai** B.Sc. F.C.A, J.P former Deputy chairman John Keels Holdings is a well known personality among the Tamils in Colombo. He and his wife Abiramy are both social workers and have done much service to the Tamil community both in social and religious fields. Abiramy especially is doing service to humanity supported by her husband. They both look after the orphanage at Ratmalana Hindu College and Home of Handicapped children. They are an example to the Tamils.

**Mr. K. Kanagarajah** J.P proprietor Milk white Industries, Jaffna.

A successful businessman and philanthropist and social worker. He is an environmentalist too. He established nurseries to obtain seedlings of plants of economic value and distributed them free to people for planting.

**Mr. P. Kailanathan** B.A. (Cey) Hon. Was Asst. G.M. Bank of Ceylon ret'd in 1984 and served as financial service consultant at capital financial services, was President of Pensioners Association of B.O.C. for 10 consecutive years. Was Trustee of the BOC Pension fund over 10 years. At the University he was the soccer captain. He is now enjoying his retirement in the cool comforts of his stately home in Wellawatte.

**A. P. Kandasamy** Director, Dept of Meteorology. He entered the service of Colombo observatory as a Junior Technical Asst. and worked diligently there, and when a separate Dept of Meteorology was established in 1948, he was appointed to the top position of Director from 1958 - 1960. During his career he attended International Meteorological conference and meetings of the W.M.O congress in Geneva. **K. Kandiah** better known as electronics **Kandiah**. He obtained his Tripos in Mathematics from Queen's College, Cambridge soon he became involved in the study of Electronics. He functioned as lecturer in Electronics at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge for 4 years 1954 - 1946.

He was later engaged in the Instrument Division of the Atomic Energies Research Establishment in Harewell, from 1946. He was leading a team engaged in the design and construction of special Instruments. He has published over forty papers on the subject.

**Dr.A.S.Kantharajah** M.Sc. Ph.D (W/Berlin) MAIAS. He was a Research Assistant in the Dept, of Biochemistry University of Sri Lanka Colombo. He was research collaborator, and Research fellow Tutor at the faculty of Agriculture, Technical University W.Berlin, Germany. Later he was lecturer Post Doctoral fellow in the Dept of Biology. Queens land University of Technology Brisbane 1987- 1990. And then lecturer in Horticulture at the University of Western Sydney. He is a socially active person too. He is the Principal of Sydney Tamil Ethnic school and Radio Announcer and Chief Producer - Radio 2000.

**Aiyadurai Karunanandhan** Education Consultant. He graduated in Botany at Madras Christian College in 1946. He was a teacher for a short period. He then did a Master's course at the Ohio University and in 1968 was at king's College, Cambridge for research work. He was appointed consultant in Audio Visual Aids, with the South Pacific Commission. He was engaged by the Colombo and later the Jaffna Universities in the Faculty of Education.

**Prof.K.Kularatnam** B.Sc. M.A(Lond) Ph.D (Lond) Dip.in Geography (Madras). Professor of Geography and Geology University of Ceylon. He was lecturer at the University Ceylon, Peradeniya for some time and then was Professor of Geography and Geology and the Head of the Department.

**C.Loganathan** is remembered today as one who achieved banking prestige for the Tamils. He was the one who formulated the reputed "Loganathan Plan". He wrote many papers on Economic Growth and these were considered masterpieces. He was a leading personality

among the Tamils and took part in many social and religious activities of the Tamils.

**Hon.Sir.A.Mahadeva's** name is all too familiar with the Tamil population. Like his forefather he was a statesmen and worked for his community. He was trustee of Sri Ponnabalavanar Temple and had the Maha Gopuram Tower built in front of the Temple. In fact the Temple is a poem in granite stone.

**Dr.Kopan Mahadeva** M.S Ph.D, MICE. FIMjge etc hails from Chavakacheheri was chairman and Director of Mite organisation. Worked in the West Indies as Professor of Production Engineering and Management at the Trinidad Campus for four years visiting professor of Birmingham and consultant.

**A.Maheswaran.** B.Sc (Cey) Hons. M.I.C.E. F.I.E. Irrigation Director, addl Secretary Ministry of Mahaweli Development. Functioned as consultant to the F.AO and the world Bank. He was President of the Institution of engineers of Sri Lanka.

**Prof. A.W.Mylvaganam** Professor of Physics Colombo. He was interested in Saiva Sidhanta Philosophy.

**Edward P. Mather** J.P (Businessman) Rev J.S.Mather Methodist minister and William K.Mather Businessman and managing Director all of one family have been prominent citizens of Jaffna.

**Mr.Muthubala Suriyar** B.Sc Eng. (Lond) F.I.E.E Gen. Manager Dept. of Electrical under takings. He served as Electrical Engineer and was appointed G.M. in 1963.

**Dr.A.G.Muttuthamby** F.R.C.S, F.R.C.O.G (Britain) A famous Gynecologist who is the founder member of the college of obstetricians and Gynecologists of Sri Lanka and is a fellow of the college. He was a member of the University Council, Jaffna. Founder chairman Association for health and counselling Jaffna, President, Jaffna Medical Association and President Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, Jaffna Branch. He was elected Honorary member of the Rotary Club of Jaffna for outstanding service to the people of Jaffna.

**Dr.T.Nallainathan**, President Ceylon Students Association U.K, Social and Religious leader Private Medical practitioner. He is known to have treated the poor free of charge. He was a devout Hindu and devotee of the Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba movement.

**Navaneetha Krishna Bharati** was from Thanjavur Tamil Nadu. He came to Jaffna in 1917 and was on the staff of Ramanathan Ladies college and later at Parameswara College. He was a Tamil Poet and a Pandithamani.

**K.Nesiah M.A.** was a veteran educationist. He was a member of the Board of Education, the Examinations council of the University Court, and Director of the People's Bank and the Jaffna YMCA. As chairman of the "Thanthai Chelvanayagam Memorial Trust" he appealed to all Sri Lankan Tamil to take a pledge to adopt Gandhian Sarvodaya society mode of life.

**Rev.Daniel P.Niles, Rev.Dr.D.T.Niles, Nathaniel Niles and W.D.Niles** were eminent Christians and were Christian Theologians.

I have somehow overlooked three more persons who were proud sons of the soil.

**Dr.K.Kanagaratnam** of Palam Road L.M.S., L.R.C.P.S, LRFP, S D.T.M H-Medical superintendent, Colombo group of Hospitals. He passed out as a doctor with first class Honours in 1925. He was a very popular school medical officer in Jaffna. He worked hard as a truly dedicated doctor. In 1954 he was superintendent Health services Colombo. He cared for all around him. He visited the sick and gave free medical treatment. He was highly interested in the W.P Cancer soc. He worked for the establishment of a Cancer and Radio therapy unit in the N.P. It was eventually installed but after his demise. He was a devoted Hindu and served his religions too.

His eldest son **Dr.Ganeshan**, is a gynaecologist and the second son **Sriskandan** in an engineer in U.K. **Arichandran** 3rd in line is an accountant who served in the world Bank, and youngest son is **Sivathondan** who is a doctor in U.K.

**Kanesathasan** son of **Mr.Alakar Saravanamuthu** of Tellappalai was Advisor IMF, Washington D.C. He was resident IMF representative in Philippines and Korea.

His younger brother **Yogathasan** was senior Assistant Value in Ceylon and lecturer in the Universities of Malaysia, Singapore and Nigeria.

His youngest brother **Easparathasan** retired as Senior Deputy Governor, Central Bank. He went on an assignment to World Bank,

Washington D.C. He also served as Budget Advisor to the Govt. of the Federated State of Micronesia.

**Dr.S.Pararajasegaram** - F.R.C.S. - F.R.C.P - F.R.C - optht. He functioned as consultant ophthalmologist, Eye Hospital, Colombo. Before that he was Registrar Royal Eye Hospital, London. He was President of the Ophthalmological Society, Sri Lanka. The Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology The International Society of Geographical ophthalmology, and President Elect, International Agency for the prevention of Blindness, Community eye care programmes in Sri Lanka. Ghana and Australia are his valuable service to the Community.

**S.T.M. Pasupathy Chettiyar** was a prosperous merchant of Jaffna. He was a learned person well - versed in Hindu traditions and was highly esteemed by the Jaffna Society.

**Dr.V.T.Pasupathy** and his sons were famous people of Jaffna. They belong to a highly respected family. Three of his sons were doctors while one is the President's counsel and another an accountant. As a family they were held in high regard and the name Pasupathy still calls for that respect.

Some names have to be quoted by their families like the Pasupathy's the Pauls are also a family with a name for fame.

**Dr. Jeyarajah Paul** was son of **Dr.S.C.Paul** and so was **Dr.Milory Paul**. **Dr. William T.Paul** was the ancestral first of the Pauls.

There was Pastor (Pothakar) Paul of Uduvil, and his son was Lt. **Col. Samuel Paul**. The Pauls and their ancestors were worthy sons of

the soil and contributed much in the field of religion and science to Jaffna.

**Handy Perinpanayagam** better known as "maker of men, and the founder of Kokkuvil Hindu College" was from Manipay. He led the youth of Jaffna - Formed the "Students Congress" Later "Youth Congress" of Jaffna, to promote Tamil and Tamil culture. At the Annual meetings of the congress were discoursed matters like, "Revival of Tamil liberations" "Art and Music". "Tamil our National Heritage". "The Tamil Renaissance". He was a great educationst and teacher who upheld Gandhian principles.

**J.T.R.Perinpanayagam** who was a much respected teacher. He was a good sportsman and won Tennis championship in Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya.

**Dr.C.Perumalpillai** - F.A.O Vet. Science Expert. He qualified in Vet. Science from Calcutta and obtained his Ph.D. (Lond) and functioned as Head of the Animal Research Division in Peradeniya. Later he served at Sudan as Head of the Animal Health Dept. Khatoum University. He was engaged in the F.A.O. Somalia and then functioned at Bangkok as F.A.O Regional Animal Production and Health Officer Asia Pacific Region.

**Rev. Father Peter A. Pillai** - O.M.I, M.A. (Cantab) M.Sc. Ph.D D.D. (Rome) Rector St. Joseph's and Aquinas college. His roots are in Kayts. He was dedicated to his church and so he went to a religious learning center in Rome. He was ordained Priest in 1934. He founded Aquinas University College at Borella. He contributed much to the

Educational field and is still remembered his fight for freedom and human rights, justice and fairplay.

**V.Ponnampalam** The communist was involved in upliftment and social work.

“Eelakesari” **Ponniah J.P** – Founder “Eelakesari” publications proprietor “Thirumagal Printing Press” Chunnakam. **Mr.Ponniah J.P.** rendered valuable service by collecting and printing some of the old manuscripts, thereby presenting their contents. He also contributed towards the social welfare of his village establishing schools and school libraries.

Nobody can forget **Mr.Pooranampillai**, who was principal of Hartley College, Pt.Pedro and later of St. Johns College. He was an exemplary teacher guide and Philosopher.

**Don Tuan Ragunatha Mudaliyar** though he belonged to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, I need to mention him as the founder of the celebrated Nallur Kandasamy Temple. To this day the founder’s progeny have been managing the temple.

**Dr.S.Rajanayagam** – F.R.C.S. an Eminent gynaecologist – left his homeland to serve in Singapore, Newzealand and other places. **Dr.V.Rajanayagam** F.R.C.S. was an orthopedic Surgeon.

**Rajakumar Rajarayan** – M.Sc (Lond) B.D.S.D.R.D., M.R.D., M.G.D., L.D.S. (Eng) is vice Dean of the Dental Faculty at the Royal College of Surgeon of England – Advisor to the Minister of Health, the Lord Chancellor on judicial appointments and an Examinor in Dentistry.

**Rudra Rajasingam I.G.P.** He joined the Police Force in 1949 and rapidly rose to the position of I.G.P in 1982. On his retirement he was appointed ambassador to Indodesia in 1985.

**Dr.S.Rajendran** - L.R.C.D.S., L.R.F.P & S.DT.M D.P.H.Supt. Antimalaria Campaign. Due to his hard work, the Campaign was very successful in wiping out the scourge of Malaria from the Island.

**K.Ramachandra** was known to be a mystic and illara Jnani - House holder saint” He led a detached life though head of the household. He founded the religious journal, “Athma Jothi” which is now being continued by N.Muthiah. Prof.M.Ramasamy M.Sc., P.H.D., D.I.C. F.R.S.C Public Analyst and scientist. He was at first Asst. Govt, Analyst in Sri Lanka, then in British Guiana, South Wales, in the same capacity. He was also Professor in the University of Technology, Libiya, Nairobi. He was a F.R.O. and W.H.O Scientist and has evaluated several insecticides for medical uses.

Could we forget **Mudaliyar C.Rajanayagam** who wrote the much valued book “Ancient Jaffna”. In fact his book was a source of information for me to write this book on Jaffna.

**C.Rasiah** - B.Sc (Lond) B.A. (Cantab) F.I.C.E. Director water works. He was described as “Ceaser’s wife. Above Board - That was what he was. He worked hard and was acclaimed by the state as one of the best engineers.

**Dr.E.V.Ratnam** - L.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., M.M.C was a leading private medical practitioner who had his roots in Jaffna. He was also a



compassionate doctor who treated the poor free of charge.

He spent most of his income in works of charity. He gave lavishly to temples and in feeding the poor. He established the Ratnam Hospital which was later managed by his eldest son Rajadurai Ratnam, also a doctor. His other son **Dr.Kumaran Ratnam** was well known and popular. A street in Slave Island has been named after him.

**Dr.W.D.Ratnavale** - M.B.B.S. M.D (Lond) Proprietor "Glass house" Pathological Laboratory. Many patients are thankful for this venture of his.

**Mr.T.Rudra** - J.P.U.M. Mayor of Colombo Municipal Council. He was a leader of the youth of Wellawatte. The Community appreciated his leadership qualities. When he was Mayor of Colombo the first citizen of Colombo, he had the privilege of receiving Her majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1954. A road in Wellawatte bears his name and bears witness to his fame.

**Dr.N.T.Sampanthan** F.R.C.S. (Glas) F.R.C.S.(Edin) Senior Physician Co-operative Hospital Moolai.

As a senior Physician he did great service at Moolai Hospital for thirty years. He was highly appreciated by the patients. The hospital had only 10 beds at the beginning. Due to **Dr. Sampanthan's** untiring effort it grew to be an important medical establishment in the North with 120 beds, a fine surgical theatre, an up-to-date labour room, and well equipped IC unit.

**P.Sangarapillai** B.A., B.Sc (Econ) B.Com., M.S.(Lond) AMIT

Dep. Commissioner of Motor Traffic, President Colombo Tamil Sangam. He was born at Maviddapuram. It was after retirement, he participated in several activities. He was president and ardent supporter of Tamil Sangam, Colombo. Four of his sons are doctors and a fifth an accountant. He wrote many books in Tamil.

**N.Saravanabavanathan** B.Sc. Engineer(UK) worked for 22 years in S.L Water supply & storage Dept. retired as Deputy Director - worked for WHO as sanitary Engineer - was project manager for 10 years. Elected fellow of the Institute of Water Management. Patron of the O.B.A. (Colombo Branch) of Jaffna Hindu College. He has another feather in this cap- a flamboyant one for that!

He is the proud **father of Sudharshan** PhD Eng. Cornell University, who worked for NASA for 10 years as Research and Development Engineer and gave up the job and founded his own firm dealing on Aero space and design and launching of Satellite. While at NASA, we was presented with group achievement award for the design and analysis of the Mars Path finder space craft.

Jaffna and the people of the Jaffna will sure share the pride and pleasure with the parents.

The **Saravanamuthus** **Dr.M.V.** His son **Pakiasothy C.C.S.** Manickasothy High Commissioner for Ceylon in Malaysia, **Sir Dr.Ratnajothi** are well known names among the Tamil Society. They have their roots in Uduvil. They will always be remembered by the Tamils.

**K.Satchithananda** son of **V.S.S.Kumarasamy** of Kandarmadam

was the head of the firm of Accountants and auditor” Satchithanandha Shockman Pasupathy & Co”. He was a member of the consulting body of the Institute of chartered Accountants and retired as its president.

I like to mention here an 18<sup>th</sup> century personality **D.J. Suyampunatha Mudaliyar** who was one of the twelve eminent scholars invited by the Dutch Government to frame the Law Parakramabahu who got him married to a “Women of Rank”. On the demise of the king of Kotte. He advanced to Kotte with an army leaving Jaffna in the hand of one Vijaya Bahu. He was eventually crowned as BhuvanekaBuhu VI king of Kotte.

**Prof.A.Sinnathamby** FRCS (Cey) FRCS (Edin) FRCOG. A well known obstetrician he encouraged and contributed freely for the study of medicine and Tamil language. Later in life he was actively involved in furthering medical and Tamil academic developments in Jaffna.

The **Sittampalam** family deserves mention here **Mr.C.Sittampalam** (snr) was C.C.S.and cabinet minister.

His son **Arjuna Sittampalam** B.Sc. (maths hon (Cey) Dip-in mathematical Physics, PhD(Lond) showed his brilliance from early age. He won great success in ‘Investment Banking’ and as ‘Fund Manager’ in Gt. Britian. He is an eminent scholar.

His only child **Ganesh** is a mathematical prodigee. His performance was spot lighted in many news papers; He surpasses his father and grand father as a genius. At the age of 8 years and 9 months he passed the G.C.E. (O/L) Maths exam with a A Grade. At 10 years and 4

months he passed the G.E.C (A/L) in two subjects. At the age of 11 years he attended mathematics degree class at the Surrey University. He graduated in Maths with first class Honours at the age of 13 in 1992.

**K.Sriskandan** (B.Sc (Lond) F.I.C.E. E.I Struct.E. EIHT. (Eng) son of **Dr.K.Kanagaratnam** proceeded to U.K in 1956. Worked in a leading Engineering establishment. He was appointed chief High way Engineer being the first non – white officer under secretary Grade in the B.C.S. After retirement he functions as Director of a leading Engineering company.

**R.Sunderalingam Senior** He joined Police Dept. as A.S.P and was promoted to S.P., D.I.G., and senior Deputy I.G.P in 1982. He accepted an assignment overseas and later joined Interpol at the Secretariat General in France. He now holds a senior position there as a specialist as drug Criminality and has earned International recognition.

**Dr.P.Subramaniam** better known as P.S. was a popular doctor and a philanthropist. He readily gave donations to religious bodies-Hindu, Christian and Catholic alike. The Jaffna urban council constructed a Public Park called as “Dr.P.Subarmaniam Park”.

**C.Sundaralingam – BSc.** Maths Tripos (Oxon) Professor of Maths M.P.for Vavuniya. He obtained the B.Sc (lond) with Honours in Mathematics and double first maths. Tripos from balliol College, Oxford. He was appointed the first professor of maths in the Ceylon University College was also warden of Union Hostel. He was popular among the students. Later he went out for politics and formed the “Adanka

Thamilar Munani”

**C.Suriyakumaran** B.A.(Cey) B.Sc. Econ Hons. He went to U.K as a scholar and was awarded the Master’s Degree in London. After working as senior Research officer in the Planning Secretariat, he joined the U.N as Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECAFE was Director for Education, Training and Technical Assistance of U.N.E.P and regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, being the first Sri Lankan to hold this post. At the U.N he was directly involved in the creation of the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Highway Network. He has lectured widely and written extensively. He was conferred the honours of Knight Commander of the most Noble Order of the Crown by the king of Thailand for outstanding service to Asia. In 1995 he was awarded the Sarakawa world Environment Prize.

Professor **A.Thurairajah** vice chancellor Jaffna University a foremost educator and a national and gifted teacher was popular among the students. He had been associated with several Universities abroad.

**V.S. Thurairajah** A.A. dip FRIBA, FIIA, ERAIA, E.I.A (S.L) chartered Architect. Specialised in Tropical Architecture from the London School of Architecture. He is a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He retired and set up private practice as “Thurairajah Associates” – Innumerable number of building all over the country have been designed by him. He has contributed several articles to newspapers and delivered Radio and T.V Talks.

**Mr.N.Gajendran** senior Partner of Gajma & co. is an expert on

Tax. We see him often on T.V giving talks on the Tax system.

Jaffna has produced another group of intelligent beings - the computer wizards.

#### **Ramanah of Computer land Vellupillai Ramanah**

Position : Managing Director CEO - Computer land  
Founder Director / CEO - Infolume  
- Finler 2000  
Member of I.E.E.E.(U.S.A)

#### **Raj Nathan**

Position : Founder / Managing Director of Finder 2000  
Group of companies. Headquartered in London,  
UK and having offices in four countries.

#### **Vaseeharan Nesiah**

Position : Founder / Managing Director of Media Solution  
Ltd.  
Office - California, USA  
Branch - Singapore , Sri Lanka

#### **Janardhanan Raj**

Position : Founder / Director of San Vision Technologies  
Ltd.,  
New York, USA.

**Thayaparan**

Position : Founder & Managing Director of  
e- Wave corporation, Colombo  
Acting chairman - CINTEC  
(Policy making body on I.T related issue in Sri Lanka)  
Acting chairman - NAITA  
- Vocational  
- Training Institute

**Udayakumar**

Chairman & CEO of HTN Information System (P)  
Ltd. Colombo

**Dr.S.Dharmavasan**

Position : Managing Director  
- Kingslake Engineering Systems (P) Ltd.  
- UK  
- Sri Lanka

**Mr.Gana Arumugam**

Founder & Managing Director of Imagintech Inc, Toronto, Canada.

In a recent article titled "Of convocations and gowns by **S.Krishnakumar**, University of Jaffna, it is stated that Professor **S.Ratnajeewan Hoole, D.Sc (Eng)**, was the only one with a foreign higher doctorate in service in Sri Lanka.

Professor **Mahalingam D.Sc(Eng)** also had the higher Doctorate now he is retired. The Hooles I admit are well known for their literacy and academic achievements and they belong to the cream of the society of Jaffna.

**R.Rahunanthanan** and **Mike Masilamani** and his wife **Shamini** are young entrepreneurs worth mentioning.

Let me turn my attention to the illustrious daughters of Jaffna.

**Appacuddy Thangamma** is a renunciate. Her Whole life is spent on the Durga Temple in her village Tellippalai. She is well conversant with the Hindu scriptures, and also an exponent of Tamil Language, Literature, Hindu culture and Saiva Siddanda Philosophy. The temple of Durga was a small wayside shrine and it is this devotee by her valiant efforts, improved the temple. She is also engaged in social and welfare service. There is a home, named "Thurgapuram Mahalir Illam" for destitute female children, she gives assistance to the sick, the elderly and refugees. The Govt. has conferred on her several titles and honour.

Lady **Swarnambal Arunachalam**, after the demise of her husband **Sir P.Arunachalam**, continued with the acts of charity started by him. She is most remembered and appreciated for the completion of the "Samadhi" of **Anaikoodu Swamy**, a Savant (chithar) and the **Sivan Kovil** at Mutwal.

**Dr.Miss.L.Candiah**, qualified as doctor in 1941. She held several important posts and served the community even after she retired.

**Miss. K. Charavanamuthu** known as the "Maths wizard" is remembered for her Principal ship of the Vadamaradchi Hindu Ladies College, Point Pedro. Her great work to develop the school is still remembered by her students.

**ini Dr.Miss.Siva Chinnathamby** As a young doctor, she took special interest in educating mothers and reducing infant mortality. Her efforts as Director of Family Planning worker gained international recognition. She has been honoured with membership and position in several overseas organisation. The S.L Govt. conferred on her the honour of "Desha Bandu" and she also received the Zonta International Women of Achievement award in 1993.

**Mrs.Sivanandhini Duraiswamy** - Social worker and artist wife of late **Yogendra Duraiswamy** is a keen student of art and painting. When her husband was in the overseas assignments, she worked for the welfare of women there. When he was G.A. Jaffna, she had organised women's conference for the upliftment of the rural women.

Now she is President of Colombo Hindu Women's society and Manager of Hindu Ladies College, Colombo. She continues with her social work, doing her utmost to the community.

**Ms.Chelvi Thiruchandran** does service to women through her establishment WERKS.

**Mrs.Sornacanthi Nallainathan**, was the first Tamil Lady under graduate. Along with three influential residents of Colombo, she organised the Saiva Managayar Kalagam -Hindu women's society in 1930,

and later established a Hindu School for Girls in Colombo.

**Dr.Mrs.Nallamma Sathiyeswara Iyer** was an outstanding pupil of Vembadi Girls School. As a doctor, she rendered valuable service to the people of Jaffna, working at Inuvil Hospital which grew to be a leading women's Hospital due to her efforts. She was the first Tamil Lady to pursue medical studies and practice as a doctor. She was also a keen social worker.

**Mrs.Ratna Navaratnam** M.A. Lit (Madras) M.A. (ED) London Educationist, Exponent of Hindu Philosophy and culture. She is also a proud product of Vembadi, she was at first Principal of Ramanathan College for Girls over 10 years. Later entered Govt. Service, as Inspectress of Girls schools and finally Education officer, Jaffna District. She authored many books on Hinduism and is still held as an eminent educationist. Her sister's daughter **Dr.Mrs.Vimala Krishnapillai** is President of Saratha Samity. She is Doctor of Psychology and an old girl of Vembadi Girls High School.

**Miss. Ruby S.Navaratnam** was a teacher at Vembadi for several years and was vice Principal. She was an office bearer of Y.W.C.A. and was a District Commissioner of the Girl Guides Association. She was a popular teacher.

**Miss.A.Hudson Paramasamy** was the first Ceylonese Principal of Uduvil Girls School. She brought the school to the forefront of educational institutions in the North.

**Mrs.G.Perumalpillai** was a social worker. She joined her

husband when he went overseas on FAO assignments, to Somalia, Bangkok, and Afghanistan. She took an active interest in community and social welfare work.

**Mrs.Manickam Sabapathy** is remembered for the noble task of rebuilding the Kailaya pillaiyar Temple at Nallur to its pristine glory.

**Mrs.Naysum Saravanamuthu** wife of **Dr.Ratnajothi Saravanamuthu** was the first lady member of the State Council. She was also a product of Vembadi Girls High School.

**Mrs.Neela Sathialingam** is an exponent of Bharatha Natiyam. She proceeded to Singapore in 1975. In 1989 she received the Singapore cultural Medallian for Dance and in 1995 was honoured by the Singapore Govt. with the title of "KalaRatna"

**Mrs.Sivanandham Thambiah** a social worker and Philanthropist worked for the well being of the Tamil Community. She makes several donations to worthy causes. Her life has been praised as an example of all that is best in Hindu womanhood. A hall Sivanantha Nilayam was built at the Saiva Mangayar school for girls in Colombo.

**Mrs.Ambika Thamotharam**, the eldest of the famous five Sivasubramaniam sisters is an exponent of Carnatic Music. So are her sisters.

Professor.**Dr.Gnana Kulendran** was Head of the Department of Music and Dance at the Tamil University of Tanjore. Now she is working on a research project financed by U.G.C on Tanjore Periyakovil the subject is " The role of Dance and Music during the period of **Raja**

**Cholan** who built the the Temple.

**Yoga Rasanayagam**, Dean of the faculty of Arts, University of Sri Lanka, Colombo Campus. Yoga has many feathers in her cap. She is geography professor. Geog. Hons (cey) Ph.D Cambridge. She worked in the University of Arizona and Michigan for 2 years. Then in Bangkok. She was a lecturer at A.T. She conducted seminars in Disaster Management there. She served at the University of Swansea (Wales) acting Director of Institute of Workers education. Acting Director of Development studies Institute Radio Artiste-vocal and veena at S.L.B.C. for 10 years. She was member of the executive council of the International Geographical Union for 8 years as representative of the S.Asian Region. She is also fellow of the Royal Geographic society.

**Jeyam Kandiah** also an exponent of Karnatic music as well as Bharata Natyam. She is in Australia continuing her service to the Muse.

**Arunthathi Sri Ranganathan** the youngest is a well known figure in this world of Art and Artistes. There is not a day we don't hear her melodious voice over the radio. She is well known internationally too and is often called by foreign countries to attend or judge at their cultural shows.

**Dr.Miss.E.M.Thillaiampalam** M.Sc. M.A. (Colombo). From 1943 she was principal of Chudikuli Girl's College. She was a Zoology graduate and her book "Dogfish" was in indispensable text book for Biology students.

**Miss.Mabel Thambiah** – She was a legend. As the first National

Principal of Vembadi, she worked day and night for the school. It was **Miss.Thambiah** who introduced science in school and H.S.C. in 1952. Though a Christian Mission school, she commenced celebrating Saraswathy Pooja at Vembadi. The School improved greatly under her administration and became a "Grade I Girls All Island School". She took a keen interest in women's education and was the president of the University women in Asia and Jaffna for several years. Vembadi still mourns her death.

**Mrs. Punithavathy Thiruchelvam** – Social worker. Who was especially engaged in the well being of blind people (Nationally and Internationally). She took an active part in promoting Tamil culture, Drama. Music and Dancing. She was vice president of the Red Cross Society, National Council for Deaf and Blind and the Sangeet Natiya Sangam.

**Mala Sabaratnam** another proud product of Vembadi. A lawyer. She is chief legal officer / Director Legal - Ceylinco groups of companies and Seylan Bank, Deputy Chairman Ceylinco consolidated Governor zonta International District 25 covering India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka – President, women-in-need pioneer women organisation in Sri Lanka-Vice President Board of Management of Hindu Women's College Colombo. Former President - Sri Lanka Women lawyers Association former President Association of Corporate Lawyers Sri Lanka former General Secretary - Chinmiaya Mission, Sri Lanka.

**Mrs. Selvi Srigananathan** an efficient lady who is a lecturer in Economics at the university of Sri lanka Colombo campus.

**Miss. Padmasani Arumugam** former Principal Vembadi Girls High school, was later Director of Education, Mannar and Knowing her ability and diligence was appointed as President Designate of the Sri Pada College of Education Kottagala.

**Miss.N.Kasipillai** held forth as Principal of Hindu Ladies College, Colombo - 6, for thirty two years I understand that during her tenure as principal she strived hard to bring up the college to a good standard and succeeded.

**Mrs.N.Nithianandhan**, scholar at the Hindu Culture Department is working in the Compilation of Hindu Encyclopaedia she deserves mention on this list.

Last not least like **Thangamma Appacuddy** in Jaffna, Jaffna born **Miss.V.Kanapathipillai** has sacrificed her while life in social and religious service. She is the Head of Saratha Samiti. With help from generous members of the public, she has established a children Home Balika Mandir for orphan children and Elders' Home for lonely mothers. News of her laudable service has reached far and wide.

**Dr.Maimoon Lebbe**, the sister - in in law of the late **Dr. M.H.M.Abdul Cader** of Jaffna who served the W.H.O in several countries as their Project Leader, has the distinction of being the first Muslim Lady doctor in Sri Lanka. That is another first for Vembadi.

**Mrs.Rasheeda Mohideen** B.A Diploma in Demography, an educationst, along with her late husband **Mr.M.A.S.M.Mohideen** B.Sc. Diploma - in Business Management (Italy) and nephew of the late **Fez**

**Abdul Cader**, founded the Ilma International Girls' School in Colombo. She also had her early education from Kindergarten to the J.S.C at Vembadi and then continued at Jaffna H.L.C.

She retired as Chief Education Officer of Sri Lanka and served as Educationist in an International School in Abu Dhabi (U.A.E).

As for the media folk from Jaffna, we have **Miss.Satsorubavathy Nathan** with a million dollar voice admired by many.

**Mr.Sivapathasundaram** was a Radio Broad caster and Tamil Research Scholar. The famous Sundralingam of Radio Ceylon who later was B.B.C. Representatives South India.

**Mrs.Gnanam Ratnam, Dr.K.S.Nadarajah** of Navatkuli. Late **S.K.Pararajasingam**

**Mr.V.Mylvaganam** and **Senthilmany Mylvaganam** who had a great following in S.India. **Mr.Sivanayagam, Sivanesachelvan , Mr.R.Sivagurunathan** of Thinakaran fame are well knowK journalists.

Lastly I like to mention those in the administrative sector

**Mr.Sivathanan , Mr.Ganeshanathan, Mr.Lankanesan Mr.K.C.Lokeswaran** who retired as S.L. ambassador to Korea and there are many more whose names I am unable to trace.

Though this voluminous chapter appears to be one of names and names only there is more than meets the eye. These are not merely names. They are Footprints.

Jaffna has and had been pock marked by military boot prints during the Portugese and Dutch regimes and for the last twenty years. Embossed on those pock marks are these Foot Prints of the famous and great men and women of Jaffna.

“Foot prints that perhaps another

Sailing on life's solemn main

A forlorn and ship wrecked brother

Seeing, shall take heart again - Long fellow

It is for the younger generation to follow suit.

“Thontrit Puhalodu thonruha Ahthilar Thonralit thonramai nanru” said Thiruvalluvar in Kural No. 236 meaning “If one is born at all one should be born to fame. Otherwise better not be born at all. It is a harsh truth for those of us who are just average. But let us be consoled – God created so many average people because He simply loves them!

I mentioned all these people of Jaffna as this book is on Jaffna only. Centuries before, those immigrants to Jaffna, moved out of the peninsula, may be to seek greener pastures or to be with the Missionaries. They settled in Trincomalee Batticaloa, Wannai, Mannar and Puttalam. Their ancestors were from Jaffna. All these sister states of Jaffna have their own great personalities to boast of.

Our Attorney General **Mr.Kamalasabeysan** hails from Trincomalee and our I.G.P.M. **T.E. Anandaraja** from Batticaloa. He had his education at Hartley College, Point Pedro. The Ponnurajahs, and the



Visvasams and Gabriels of Mannar and the Aiyadurai clan of Vavuniya are some of the eminent Tamils whose foot prints should be pointed out to the next generation to take pride of and to follow.

“They also serve who only stand and wait” said Milton so are the parents who sacrifice their whole life to bring their children to the forefront. Such parents also are a pride to the soil.

There are in the present generation a great number of men and women who are social workers and philanthropists who make others happy.

Knowing the thirst of the Tamil community for classical music and Dance, a young man who goes by the name of Kambavarithy Jeyaraj and his young and ardent supporters, with the help of many business executives and philanthropists of Colombo, organise annually a five or six days festival of Music called Rama Nama Ganam - music in the name of Rama. They get down vocal artistes from India, and give a chance for local artistes too to sing keerthenam. “Carnatic Music” remarked some one during a T.V. Programme on music, “is referred to as Thosai Kadai Music”. I beg to disagree . It so happened in late 40’s or early 50’s, most Tamil Cinema songs were based on Carnatic Music. As in any Tea boutique they are played as loud as ever and so people ignorant of its worth and value called it so. Any song in Carnatic Music is sung in praise of a God or other. Classical Music has its origin in the sound of the Dumbel in Lord Siva’s hand.

In fact it is said in Hindu Culture, that the sound that arose from

the Dumbel (Udukku) was the origin of Carnatic Musci. Lord Siva is said to have gifted this Music to His devotees in South India. And during this music festival, an appreciative audience sits enchanted listening to this divine music in a divine atmosphere, thanks to the followers of Sri Rama.

I was told that there are 72 basic ragas from which develop innumerable ones . There are 7 - 108 thalas. Those who understand the nuances of the Art, say, the Music is like the aromatic fragrance of camphor.

“What witchery of Music is Sounding ?

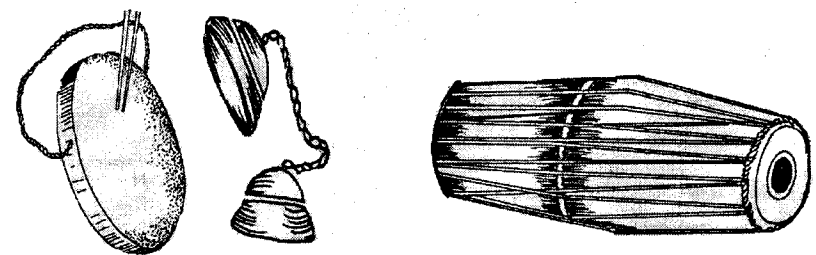
What wind flings it to fill the sky ?”

Rabindranath Tagore

I have steered clear of politics and politicians , as everybody knows who our politicians are and what they have done and what they are doing. Repetition is not necessary .

“In politics as in physics, action and reaction are equal and opposite”

Prof.Jagat.





*One scholar begets many -  
many beget many more  
And so to infinity.*

## 12. War and Destruction

“The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold” Lord Byron

I take a deep breath before I launch on this sore subject. My first experience of this thing called war was during the second world war. In the primary school, we were given A.R.P(Air Raid Precaution) exercises. At a particular time the Head Master would blow a whistle and we would run out and fall flat face down on the ground with a small stick about 5 inches long across our mouths and cotton wool stuffed in our ears. At the next whistle we would run back into the school. If that was war it was fun we thought.

Children usually have a way of incorporating world events in their games. So did we our teams were U.K, U.S.A., France, Russia, Germany and Japan and Emden. We fought many a “battle” in these names. Then we heard our elders talking of an atom - bomb in hushed tones. And then we were gleefully flinging paper balls of ‘Atom Bombs’ at each other hardly aware of the mushroom cloud and the annihilation it caused. It was much later I read about it in an article in a Reader’s Digest, written by one of the pilots sent on the Mission. I was horrified and spent many a sleepless night and shed many a tear for the people affected by the radiation.

In “The Diary of Ann Frank” I found what racial hatred could do and in the novel “Two women” by Alberto Moravia I got to know the horrors of war. But when I saw the film with Sophia Loren in the lead I could not sleep for days together.

For a short spell I was working in a N.G.O Forum for Human Dignity with **Maheswary Velautham**, A Human Rights Lawyer. My work was to collect and compile a Situation Report, from News papers and from clients who came to the office crying to find their children. All these were filed under "missing persons". I had to take news papers cuttings on arbitrary arrests, detentions, custodial death, incidents of rape and torture committed against Tamil youths in particular. And in the evening when the "Purple Dusk are done , under a whirling and whirring fan, I think about these cases.

So many such things taking place around me and here I am leading a comfortable life. I felt ashamed of myself. I thought and thought on the suffering of these young men and women and finally decided to run away from it all – cowardly though it seemed. I could not stand it so I resigned from my work.

But as regards the war in my own country, I am at a loss for words to express my feelings.

I have before me an article titled "Who let Sri Lanka Down? (Sunday Times Plus - Oct 2002) written by a person from the South He traces the "divide and rule". Policy of the British who set up the Sinhalese against the Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. And then he goes on to the "Sinhala only" Cry of S.W.R.D.B. - and later during Srimavo's rule how the situation deteriorated - the system of standardisation at which the Tamil youth rose in defiance, In between 1956 and 1971 there were communal riots based on racial hatred.

**C.Rasanayagam** in his book, "The history of Jaffna" mentions the atrocities committed by the Portugese against the Tamils in 1620. It seemed they slit open the abdomen of Tamil women and thrust their infant babies inside, and left them to bleed to death. Nearly 300 years later in Emergency 58" Tarzie Vitachi wrote of an incident in Polonnaruwa (during the 1958 communal riots) how a pregnant Tamil woman's abdomen was slit open and she was left to bleed to death.

Who or what could explain this phenomenon ? Rider Haggard ? Freud ? Watson Crick ? or could Shakes Peare's theory on Barabas and the Jew explain this ? In late '70's or early 80's at Maho junction when the Jaffna bound train was halted a wild mob got into it and harassed the Jaffna passengers. Screwdrivers were used to stab them and we were told the wounded were brought to Vavuniya and admitted to the hospital. Then again in 1977, there was another major riot and we saw people (refugees) crying all the way as the stream of buses passed through Vavuniya. Of course many were saved by kind - hearted Buddhists and Muslims too.

A former colleague of mine who went to A'pura on official duty in 1977 was killed even as he fell on bended knees and begged for mercy. In the Vavuniya district there was a little Tamil village called Aasikulam. It seemed the Govt, colonised Sinhalese in two villages on either side of this Tamil village. During the time of tension, the villagers from the two colonies moved into the middle one and massacred the sleeping population. Was it state craft at its best ? asked many Only those who had come to Vavuniya on some business and stayed the night there

escaped and lived to tell the tale of disaster, and then the holocaust of 1983 that the whole world got to know of. Racial hatred was again the cause of it. When the L.T.T.E attacked 13 soldiers in Thinneveli, Jaffna the Govt and the people walked straight into their hands. This I believe was the beginning of the war in Sri Lanka. The youth rose up against the state - the older generation as usual were docile and silent - never retaliating. They crouched in their homes at the sound of military boots and shivered when their gates were flung open. But a voice from the wilderness of Wannu roared 'No more genuflecting - Sit up - Heads up and March and attack' Commanded the voice and march and attack, they did. As Sir Winston Churchill said of the Nation, "Their will was resolute and remorseless, and as it proved "un conquerable" So they marched and attacked. Debacle after debacle followed, "while all the world wondered". In a Sunday Tabloid the Defence Columnist had stated, "Even the Military High Command wondered how these youth could perform like this inspite of many on slaughts on them! It is the will that was strong and their high discipline and dedication to the cause.

The last attack on Kattunayake Air Port in 2001 July left every body speech less. The media described it as a strategy meticulously planned and superbly executed with no loss of civilian life. That was a relief.

A friend of ours, a young girl who had a wooden leg after a train accident, she had met with, was in the camp during IPKF time. After being three days in the camp, she had left the camp to go home for a bath. As she did not return ,people went in search of her. They found the wooden

leg thrown in the bushes - It is needless to say what would have happened to the girl.

It was at that time, my husband who was in Oman wrote, "Some of my colleagues are crying. Their parents have been killed and their bodies thrown on the roads for scavenger birds and beasts to feed on and he continued, "At this time to have a natural death and a respectable funeral, we should be fortunate". I was deeply touched by this. last sentence. That was the horror of war. What justice can these poor, hurt, humiliated and voiceless people of Jaffna expect and from whom? Perhaps the perpetrators may not know that the tears of an orphan and the curse of a widow are far more powerful than the words of a sage. Only time will show them. For, "The Mills of God grind but slowly, but exceedingly small".

With the cessation of hostilities and the current peace talk and cease-fire, and the opening of the A-9 road, I also got a chance to go to Jaffna in Sept 2002. As we passed Elephant pass and entered the peninsula, I found that every crownless palm, every roofless house, every cracked wall, every house reduced to a mound of sand and stone, every weary face with sunken eyes and far away look, told a tale of woe. One could discern from the frustrated smile and talk, what they had gone through. Different people had different things to say. But all agreed on two points. "The library why did they burn it ? If they burn the books can they destroy the knowledge in our brain? And it is because of the L.T.T.E. that we can hold up our heads and walk about anywhere fearlessly. Most people had the same opinion of the "Boys" "The youth used to challenge

those who did not like the uprising". "What have you achieved by Ahimsa?" They queried, their young blood at boiling point after each communal riot. "Their mothers and grand mothers have observed so many fasts" – said another senior member. "It is these rigorous fasts that gave a handful of youth, the strength, the stamina and the will power to strike terror at the hearts of those who struck terror in the hearts of harmless, unarmed Tamils and to defy the state." "What about the other groups with the Ealam Label?" you ask. "Did any of the others lay down their life for us ?" they retort. "You know now why the poor are behind the L.T.T.E". This was the attitude of the war weary Jaffna man.

But people there are still uneasy and uncertain "We are living in an open prison" They lamented. "In an independent island a section of the people are not independent." What is the use of independence ? They ask. "If the LTTE comes, they will put a stop to all the corruption. If we go to them about a problem usually property cases they solve it in no time, and we accept their word." Recently young boys have started eve - teasing. When they are reported to the LTTE, they are dealt with severely - "respect women. They are told. "Your mothers and sisters are also women" they remind them . The tax system worries some. Others say it is to feed the cadets. They live frugally and spend on essentials only" said some and justified them.

What caused them more consternation was not loss of life and property but the burning of the Library. That was the pride of Jaffna and every one was hurt about it and still speak about it. In Hindu culture any printed material is a symbol of the goddess of learning Saraswathy . They

think a book is something sacred and to destroy these books is a heinous crime and a curse on those who did it.

When Alexander the great burnt the Persian Royal Palace of Persipolis , Rabindranath Tagore called him a barbarian, because one of the rooms contained a library. What would be say now? Even J.R. seemed to have asked , "What sort of animals are these?"

Now the people of Jaffna are just waiting and waiting for peace and have full confidence in the Prime Minister and the Peace talks.

When I went to Mullaitivu in May for a temple festival, I had the opportunity to step into one of the "Maavirar Thuyilum Illams" Repos-ing Home of the Heroes".

The dead militants are not cremated even if they are Hindus. Their remains are buried. Rows and rows of graves of the youth who gave up their own precious life for others to live. Their names were neatly written and they were.

"Each in his narrow cell for ever laid"

I never felt I was walking about in a cemetery. It is so well kept, so clean and I felt I was walking about in a sacred place. The air was solemn and hundreds of them lay there silently with a rich, courageous heart. Their life was snuffed out so early in life. I could not help but echo Gray's sentiments.

"Here rests his head upon the lap of mother Earth"

A true son of the soil who toiled from birth,

To save other lives giving up his own

Like a worthy seed on earth he's sown"

Had they lived could not they have become architects, musicians  
artistes, scientists, lawyers or orators and builders of a nation ?

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene

The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear”

So are these gems of “Purest ray serene” buried in the soddy bosom  
of the earth. Residents told me on Hero’s Day it was an unbearable sight.  
The dear and near ones collect round the graves and wail through out the  
day. When I heard this my heart reached out to those mothers of the  
South whose young sons were slain in a senseless war where brother  
killed brother. What did Thomas Hardy say of war, in “The man he killed”

“Yes quaint and curious war is

You shoot a fellow down

You treat if met where any bar is

Or help to half - a crown!

The words of this stanza flashed in my mind when I saw in a  
newspaper a picture of the official generals and unofficial generals shak-  
ing hands.

Yes in peace times they

“should have sat down to wet

Right many a nipper kin”.

That is what war is, it is quaint and curious. There was an episode  
in a Readers Digest:. During world war two a German and a French  
General were exchanging P.O.W’s. When they met at the center of a

bridge in no man’s land each one admired the other’s personality. They  
exchanged their prisoners shook hands and went back to their camps.  
Once they reached the camp they started shooting at each other! Nothing  
more quaint than that!

I said “in this senseless war brother killed brother” - This dot of an  
island in the Indian ocean where for centuries the people have been  
moving freely from North to South and East to West, it is not impossible  
to intermarry among communities. There had been conversion of names  
like the cholian Paniker’s son Sempaka Perumal becoming Sapumal  
Kumara and then Buwaneka Bahu VI. Most Malabar immigrants have  
moved to the deep South too. The Sinhala tele - Drama Kadulla starring  
Jackson Anthony and Vasanthi Chathurani may throw more light on this  
subject. Recently a minister in the South traced his relations in the North.  
I am not far from the truth therefore when I said that “ in this senseless  
war brother killed brother.” It is a crying shame and ironical that such  
atrocities are committed in a country harbouring two great Religions,  
Hinduism and Buddhism, and both religions stress on non- violence.

However, now that the peace talks are on, people are waiting with  
bated breath for peace to dawn and to settle down in their own homes.  
Many internally displaced people are at a loss as their houses are in High  
security Zones and so cannot be resettled. Their only hope is the Prime  
Minister who is determined to have the Peace process succeed and let  
normalcy return for every body’s sake and economy’s sake.

Many temples venerated by Hindus are destroyed. Those must  
be renovated and rites performed to erase the impurities that have

desecrated the places of worship. Temple is important to the Jaffna man who is suffering silently at the state of these temples due to the war.

I would like to refer to some quotations on war by famous people for the reading pleasure of the public.

"The difference of race is one of the reasons why I fear war may always erupt, because race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance".

**Benjamin Disraeli**

"Racial imperialism is even more odious than economic imperialism"  
Acharya Kimpalin

**Quotes from Sir Winston Churchill**

"The whole history of the world is summed up in the fact that, when nations are strong, they are not always just and when they wish to be just, they are no longer strong.

"In war time..... Truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.

The chubby, cigar -mouthed Churchill spoke of Kaiser in his characteristic way:

"At every crisis the Kaiser crumpled

In defeat he fled;

In revolution, he abdicated,

In exile, he remarried"

Churchill advocated -

" In war : Resolution

In Defeat : Defiance

In Victory : Magnanimity

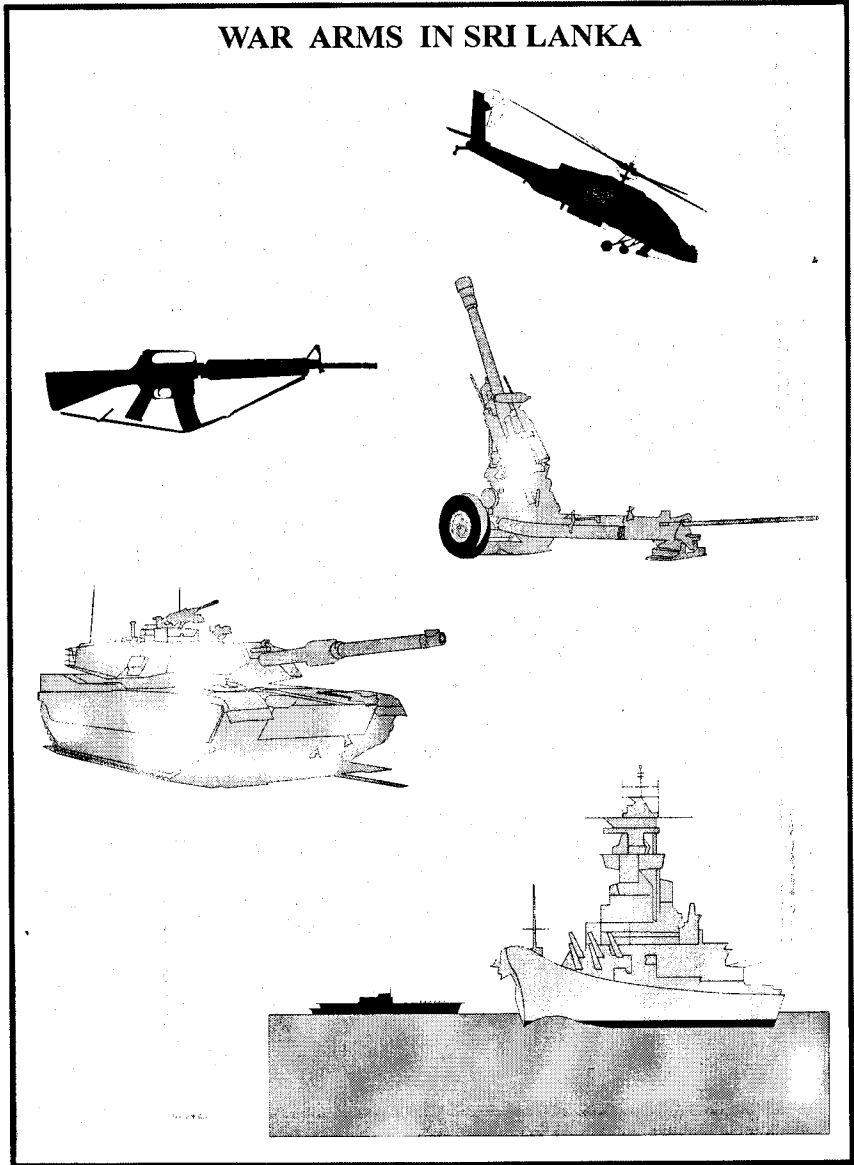
In Peace : Goodwill"

**Sabbe satha Bhavanthu Sukhi tatha** (Let all beings be happy)

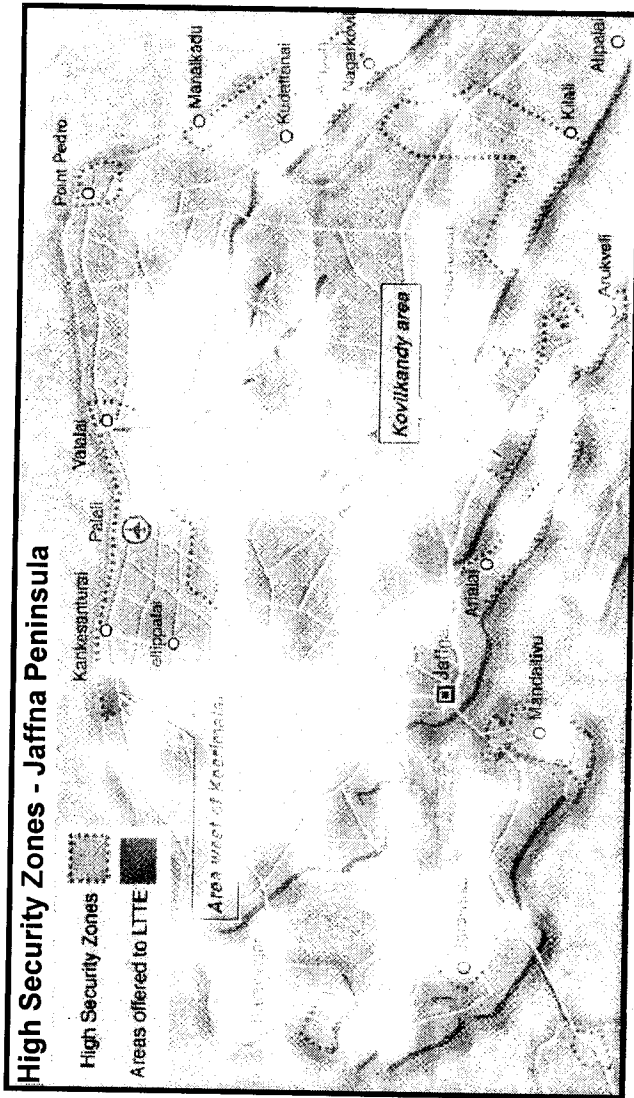
**The Buddha**

So be it!

**RAVAGES OF WAR**

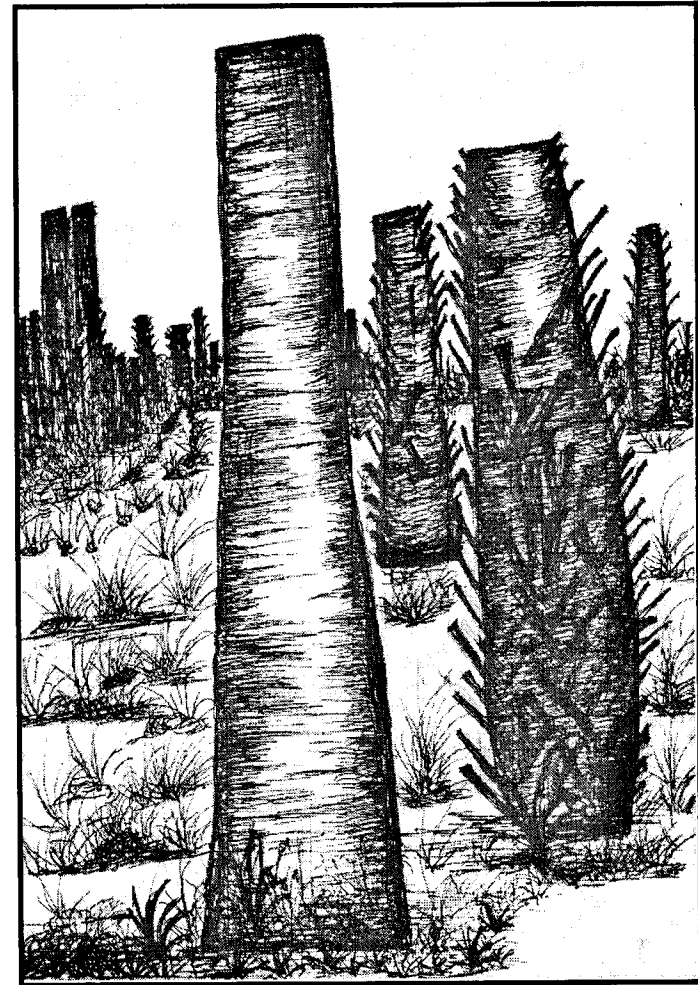






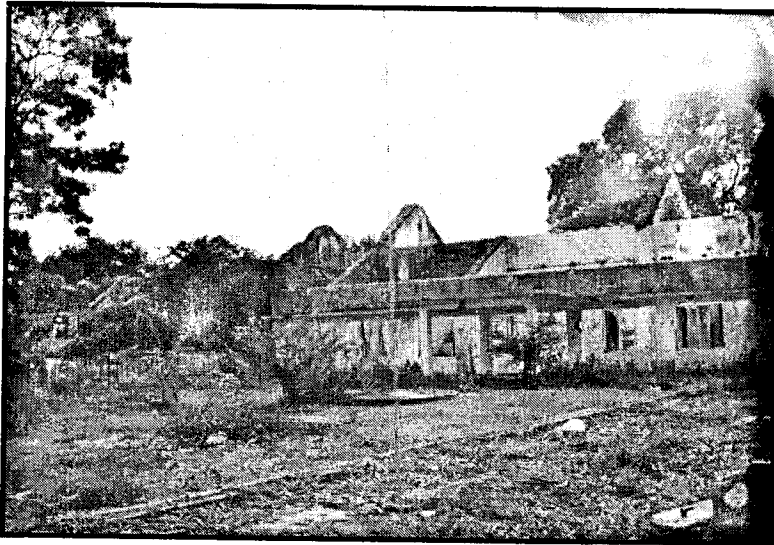
COURTESY SUNDAY TIMES PLUS

**RAVAGES OF WAR**



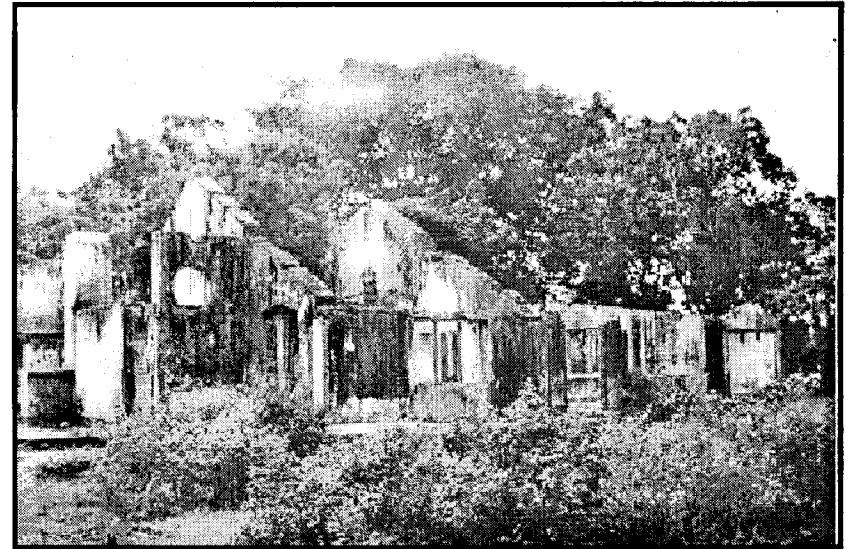
*"Every Crownless Palm....."*

**RAVAGES OF WAR**



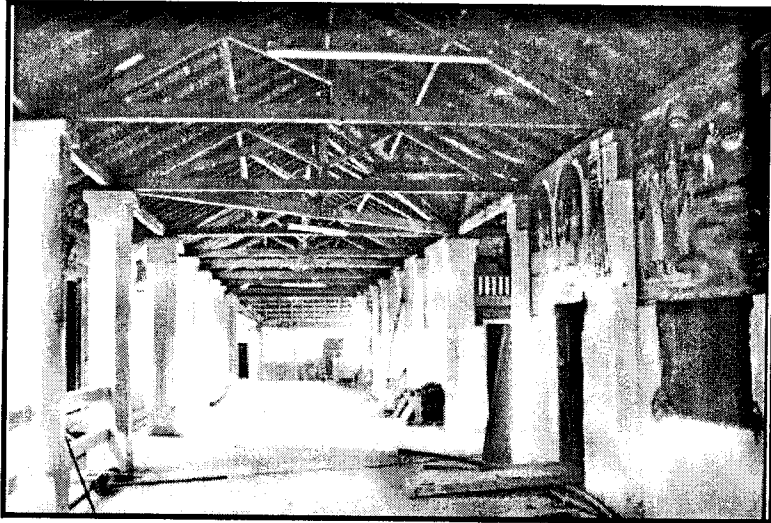
*"Every Roofless Building....."*

**RAVAGES OF WAR**



*"Every Cracked Wall ....."*

**RAVAGES OF WAR**



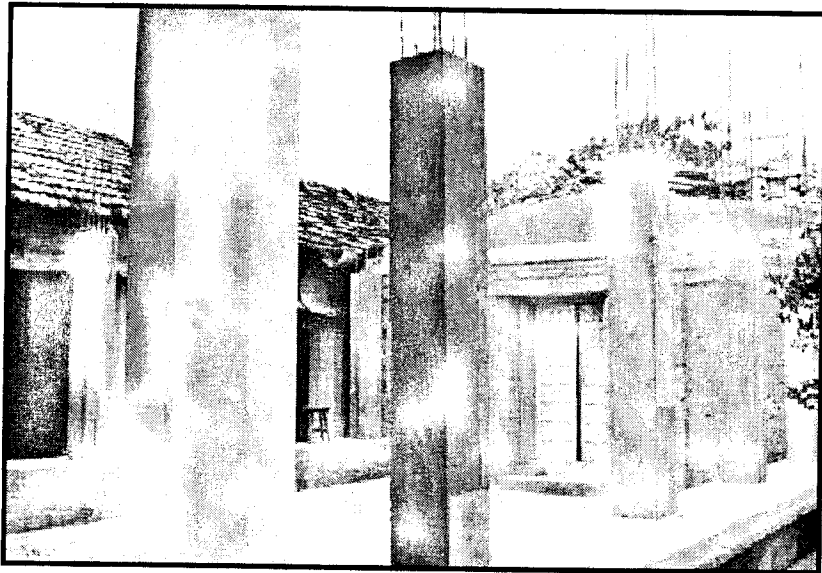
*Empty seat of Learning*

**RAVAGES OF WAR**



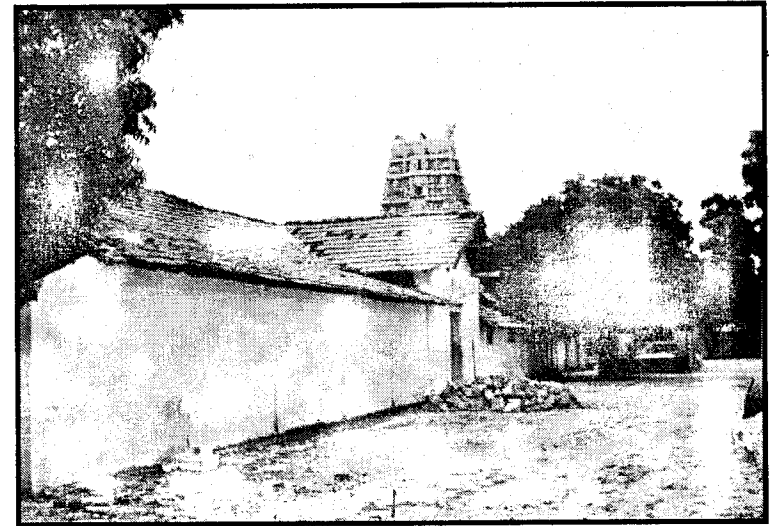
*Ruined Temple*

**RAVAGES OF WAR**



*Shell struck Temple*

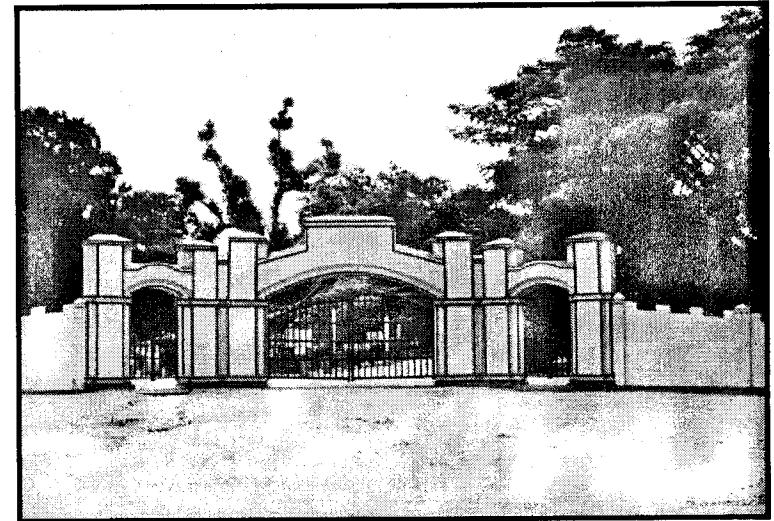
**RAVAGES OF WAR**



*Forlorn Temple*

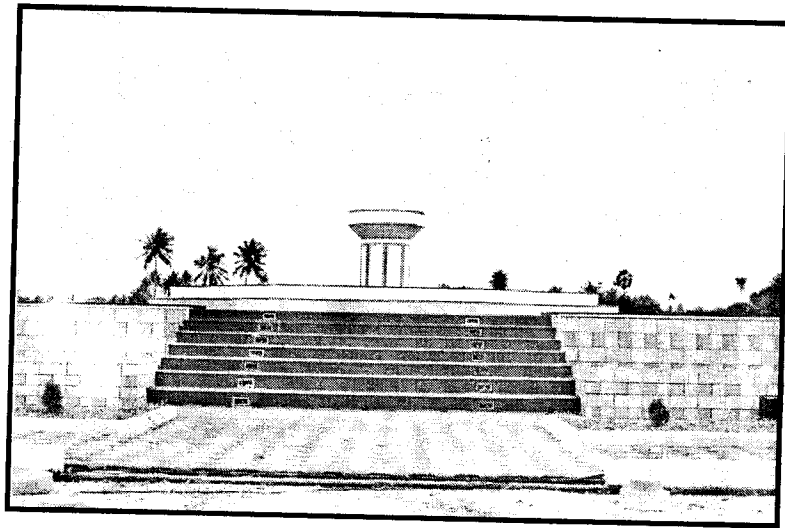
**RESPECT FOR THE DEAD**

**RESPECT FOR THE DEAD**



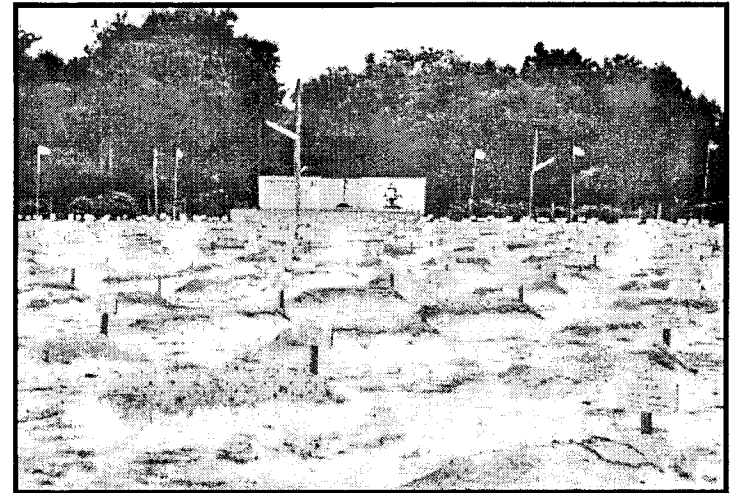
*Entrance to the Maavirar Thuyilum Illam  
(Home of the reposing Martyrs)*

**RESPECT FOR THE DEAD**



*Special Dais to perform the rites and pay respect for the dead*

**RESPECT FOR THE DEAD**



*Graves in the making*

**RESPECT FOR THE DEAD**



*"Their's not to reason why  
Their's but - to do and die"*

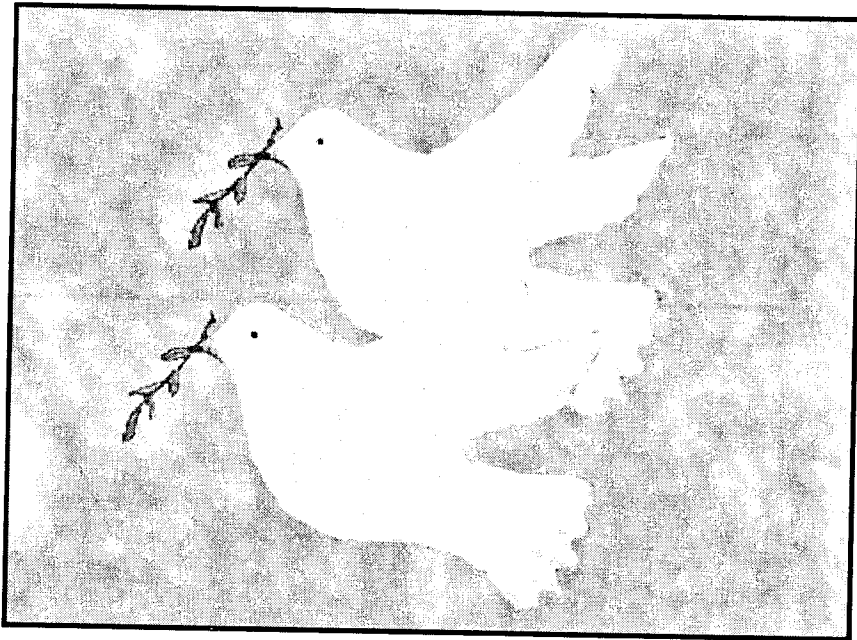
**RESPECT FOR THE DEATH**



*Each in his narrow cell for ever laid*



## Peace at the horizon



## 13. Brain Drain

I shall never respect my brains until I pick a few gold coins from them”

- Thomas wolfe

This phenomenon has been taking place in Jaffna as far back as late fifties and early sixties. It is a recurring issue in the modern world. It affects many people and many countries, especially the Western countries.

Brain drain is the migration of intelligent or brainy people seeking greener pastures, a well – paid career, and a life of luxury which is scarce in Jaffna, better education for their children. And ambition and some even went for adventure’s sake.

It could also be the tactics of a developed nation to get down the talented people for man power to run their hitech schemes in many fields.

Many of the International schools here in Colombo have children of these wealthy parents who are working abroad and financing this high cost of education. In spite of free education to make education available to all, the discrepancies are there as large as life itself.

The foreign countries like the Middle East countries for example get down talented workmen especially artisans because they cannot find these personnels in their own country. While our man is satisfied with the pay, which is far above what he got here, his employer feels equally smug because, he also gains economically. There has been a new wave



of such immigrants to the Middle East.

And now the war situation has also contributed to this stream of immigrants to the West and East as well.

The Tamils in general in which ever country they work are respected for their hard work, high literacy and intelligence.

They are amply rewarded for their contribution to the country they served. Way back home the most qualified and capable Tamil can only rise as far as a deputy. Thus far and no further.

There may be an exception or two where the deserving are given top posts. In late forties, after the war, families by families moved out of Jaffna to Malaysia and Singapore.

There they have done well in many fields. Mr. Thuraisingam was a journalist in Malay Straits Times, Dato Clough Thuraisingam was former Education Minister, Malaysia.

**W.Satchithanandhan**, a lawyer now a Magistrate in Penang.

**A.Devarajah** (A.D. Raja) practising lawyer in Malaysia and his eldest brother **A.Ponnurajah** (A.P.Raja) was a legislative councillor in Singapore and was also Singapore's Ambassador to Australia, have their roots in Vaddukoddai except for **Dato Thuraisingam** and **W.Sachithnandhan** who have their roots in Araly - Navaly.

**Mr.C.Mahadeva** who hails from Thayiddi was Information officer in Malaya (then). The Government of Malaysia pays him a handsome pension now.

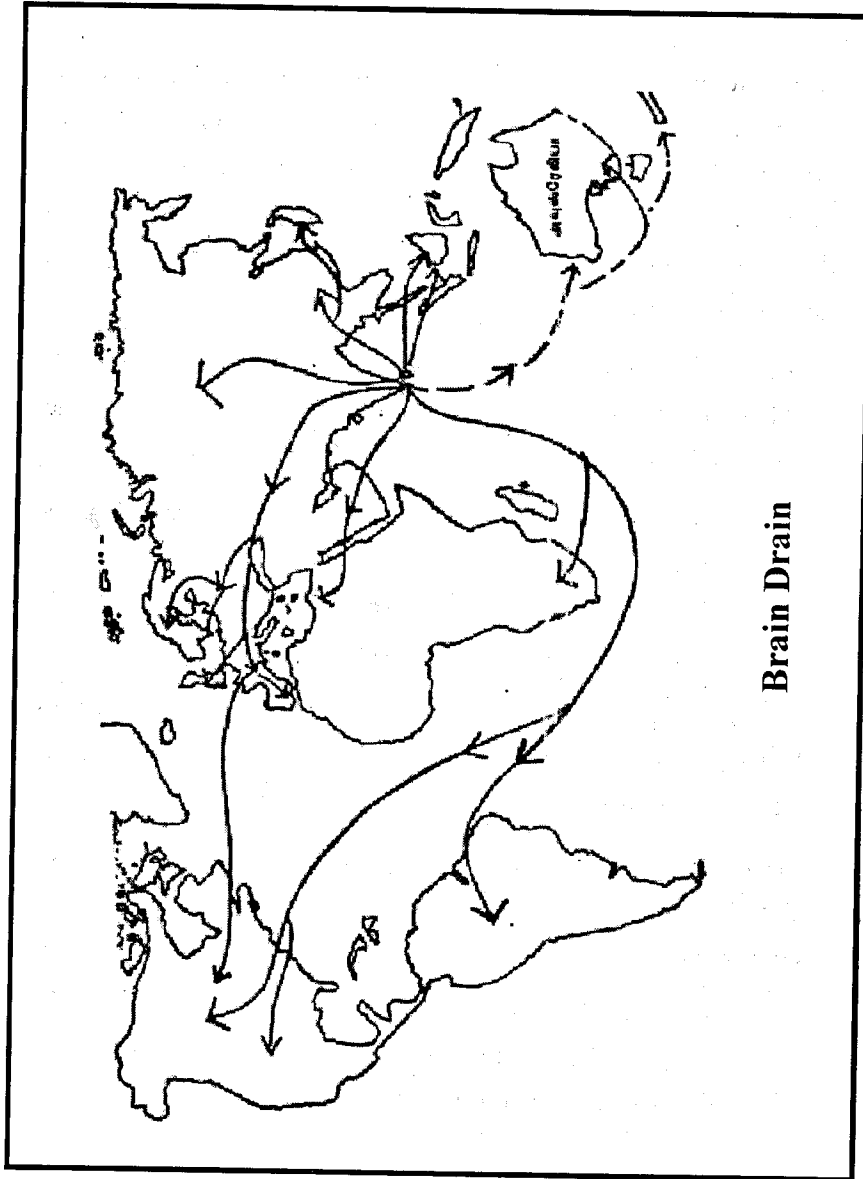
People leave their mother land mainly for economic prosperity. But in the present war situation, parents some how find the means to send their children abroad for safety. Now both in Colombo and Jaffna, each Tamil Home has become an 'elders' home where old people of three score and ten or less or more are eking out an existence with literally speaking no strong arm to support them, as they struggle about their daily chores.

They are old and weak and have voluntarily sent their children abroad. "Let anything happen to us, "let our children be safe and sound else where," is their view.

Many elders home have sprung up and many lonely mothers find a haven there. The homes are financed by their children who work abroad and they spend their life of retirement in peace. They are well looked after by the staff.

Perhaps should peace come to stay, their children may return to serve their homeland and look after their aged and aging parents. There is just a ray of hope as the dawn of peace appears in the horizon.

Let us hope and pray that those involved in the peace process succeed in their efforts. Many a sorrowing heart will bless them if life returns to normalcy and they could live in peace without fear.



#### 14. "The Katpaha Tharu"

An account of Jaffna is not complete without a word about the palmyrah - the miracle Palm referred to as "The Katpaha tharu". According to mythology katpaha tharu is a tree in heaven. If one stands under it and makes a wish, it comes true.

It is in other words a celestial tree a wishing tree, that grants boons to people.

Palmyrah got this sobriquet because it is a blessing to the Peninsula. Its upright posture is a fitting symbol of the unbending character of the Jaffna man. The Jaffna man lives in an arid land. He is hardy and hard working. He had with stood many a storm in the chequered history of Jaffna. He is sturdy. So is this palm long lean and strong; it with stood the storms and tempests that swept over the Peninsula. From the root to the crown the palm is useful to man. There is a children's song which goes like this.

Child - Palmyrah O Palmyrah

Why have you grown here ?

Palmyrah : - Shall I tell you the reason

Why I have grown here

My crown of leaves you use

To fence around your house

My tall body is used

As beams and girders of support

The roots are rich in starch

You can eat these nutritious roots

But my tender fruits

Give "Nungu" the sweet juicy jelly like stuff

O' Man! Every part of me is useful to you

It is to make myself - every part of my

Body - of use to you have I grown.

It is resilient -so is the man of the soil

It is defiant -as are the youth of Jaffna

It has the sturdiness to stand up and upright

And unbent in any situation, like

The sons and daughters of the soil.

It is in the Shield and Badge of my Alma mater Vembadi Girls' High School. We were often told at our school assemblies how every part of the palm is useful to man and we were advised to grow up straight and strong and philanthropic and unselfish, like this palm.

This spirit of the palmyrah pervades the entire peninsula and enters and empowers the soul of the Jaffna man who under any ordeal keeps his head up and swims against the current.

Talking of the palmyrah, leads to the goods produced from the Palmyrah which are housed in a shop aptly called "Katpaham" at Bambalapitiya. The arts and crafts of the people are closely connected with this palm. The timber, because of its durability is very much desired in house - building . It is one of the products exported.

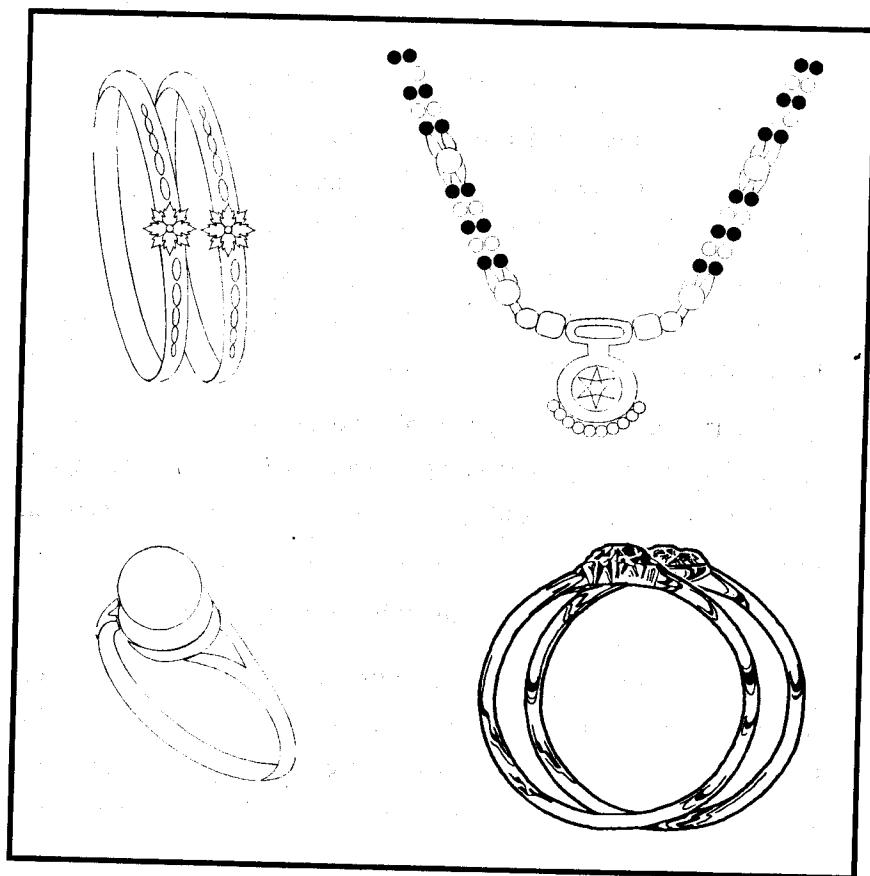
The toddy tapped from the tender green spadix of the inflorescence is a delicious drink and from this is made a medical treatise-like sugary substance called "Kallakaram". The palmyrah dried leaves were used to write manuscripts in ancient days. Some of these Ola manuscripts are found in many South Indian Temples. They are also possessed by those astrologers who read the "Kaandam".

Then the leaves when dry are split into strips and used to weave mats, Hats, baskets. Many other items are made out of the dried palmyrah leaves. Besides these, ropes and brushes are also made out of the strong fibres of the stem.

#### **Other Crafts**

Even clothes were woven with cotton available then and exported from "Paruthi Thurai" Point Pedro - Paruthi - means cotton 'Thurai' - port. In ancient Tamil literature, these clothes were described to be so exquisite that the run of the threads in a fabric could not be made out. The Tamils of Jaffna then held mastery over this craft of weaving textiles too.

When Jaffna was under the Dutch, their ability in this craft was further enhanced by the rulers who got down weavers called chenniars,



*Jewels*

from Andhra.

These weavers produced sarees and other clothes. The sage Thiruvalluvar belonged to the weaver's caste, and the chenniars prided themselves of belonging to the caste of this sage and poet. Handlooms, were used in the early days and the industry flourished in Jaffna. They produced, "coarse sarees, towels, sheets and the like.

Jaffna gold is very much valued. The gold smiths made jewellery of beautiful and intricate designs, sought after by ladies of high rank. The goldsmiths were described as ingenious workmen. The ornamental work was both delicate, and eye-catching so to say.

The stapatris of India - artisans in sculpturing, were got down to Jaffna when building temples and the temple ther (chariot).

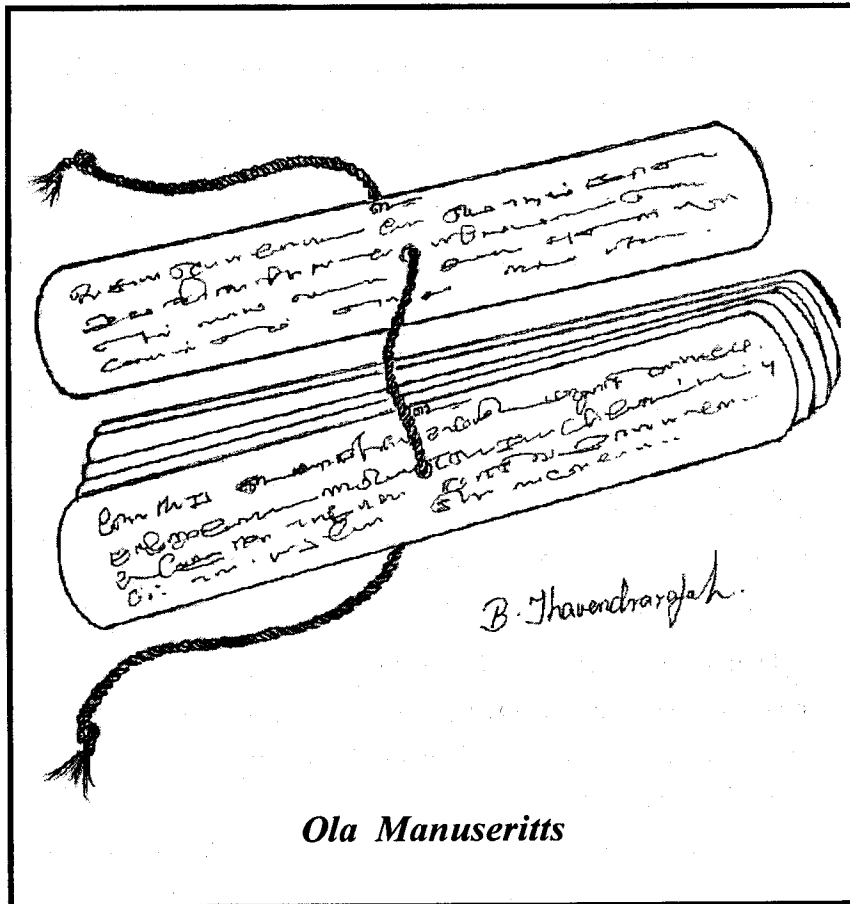
Dyeing, wood work have also been well developed in ancient Jaffna. Roots of certain plants were used in dyeing.

A Tamil system of medicine called "Chiththa Vaithiam" was handed down from generation to generation. Drugs were and still are made from herbs. Snake bite native doctors are found even today in certain areas of Jaffna.

I would like to recall an incident relating to a snake - bite expert. Once late in the evening, a lady who helped us in domestic chores, was bitten by a creature when she went to draw water from the well. We all thought it could be a snake and rushed her to the doctor. As our car halted at the entrance, the doctor seemed to have told his assistant, "The person they are bringing is not snakebite victim. She is stung by a scorpion".

And he sent a powder to be applied on the bite- mark. He did not even see her.

Some of these snake - bite experts are like mystics. They do not demand a fee for treatment, as they feel their ability to cure should not be commercialised.



**PALMYRAH PALMS**



**ITEMS MADE OUT OF PALMYRAH LEAVES**

## 15. Conclusion

“The Moving finger writes and having writ moves on”

Omarkahyam

History has shown that Jaffna is nobody's Manifest Destiny. The Portugese went the way Ozymandias went and many an Ozymandias would go the way the Portugese went.

If we go by legend, Jaffna belongs to the descendants of Yalpanan, and if we go by history, to the descendants of the Malabar Immigrants and other immigrants from S.India, who settled there centuries before. They should continue to live there and enjoy the good life they have led before the war and strife.

As before , this land must be one-

Where women can go about unescorted ;

Where women and woman hood are respected;

Where there be no eve- teasing ;

Where there are no under - world gangs

And way side murders ;

Where the University functions with decency and dignity

Where there is no sadistic ragging ;

Where all religions and races live in

peace and amity

Where all religions and culture are held in

High regard;

Where there be no spicing of foreign culture

introduced by returnees;

Where the beaches ring with the laughter of innocent

children;

Where there is no night – life alien to

Tamil culture

Where all are at peace with themselves, with

God and the world at large;

Where men, women and children toil hard to

Improve the economy of the Land.

This is the dream wish and prayer of every Jaffna – born person.

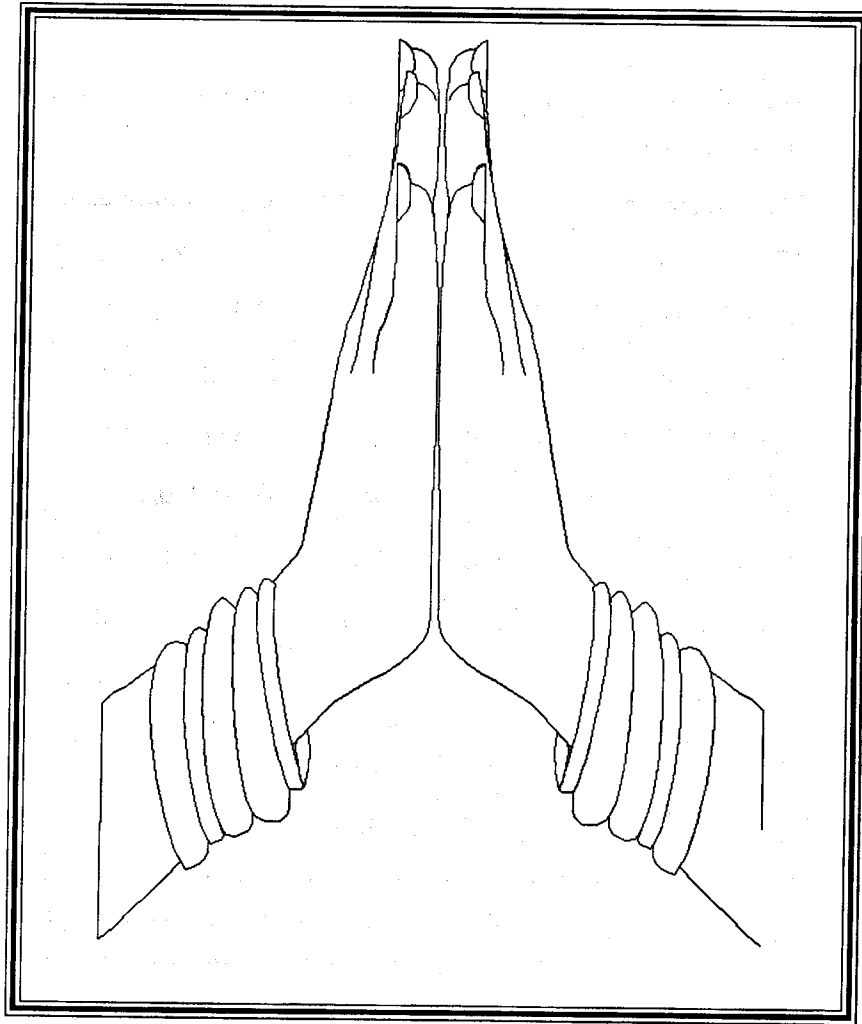
But will Jaffna ever be such a place ? Will it go back to its former glory  
? Will it? Will it? Will it ever ?!!

German experts have foretold, that the underground water in Jaffna  
may go dry due to indiscriminate burials and buried mines. To clean all  
this is a Herculean task- like cleaning the Augean stables. Hercules at  
least had the rivers, Alpheus and Peneius to help him. Who or what can  
help the Jaffna people clean up all this mess left behind by an inhuman  
war ?

Said Sir **P.Arunachalam** a great scholar statesman and an  
eminent son of the soil “I have great belief in the Tamil Community.  
They will be saved by their common sense and marvellous industry, their  
innate disdain of comfort, and Spartan simplicity, their knowledge and  
love of mother tongue.

“The secret of happiness is freedom. And the secret of freedom is  
courage”.

Yes. As usual their courage only can help them!



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S.Jebanesan (Bishop in Jaffna ,Church of India)



## **The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of thy Peace

Where there is hatred let me sow love

Where there is injury pardon.

Make me an instrument of Thy Peace

Where there is despair let me bring hope

And where there is darkness, light

Where there is doubt, faith.

Make me an instrument of Thy Peace

It is in Pardoning that we are pardoned

In giving to all men that we receive

And it is by dying that we wake to eternal life.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Thilaka Vivekanandhan Wijeyaratnam nee Aiyadurai**, was born in Jaffna in 1934. She had her early education at Jaffna Hindu Ladies' College and continued at Vembadi Girls High School till her S.S.C. Thereafter, she went to Holy Cross College, Trichy and did her Inter Science. She joined Madras Christian College in 1954 and graduated from there in 1956. From 1st July 1956 she has been teaching. She got married to Mr. Vivekanandhan Wijeyaratnam, an Agricultural Instructor in 1964, and has two sons - Kumar in U.K. and Mayuran in Australia. She was on a teaching assignment in the Maldives from 1985 -1989. She contributes articles on religion and education to some Colombo newspapers. She has written three short stories in Tamil on upliftment of women for cenwor. She is involved in social and religious services in Colombo. This is her first attempt in writing a book.