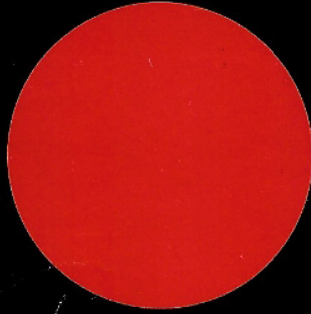


# TAMIL EELAM:

## *A State of Mind*

By  
*S.Sivanayagam*



- ◉ Fr. Tissa Balasuriya
- ◉ S.Sivanayagam
- ◉ S.Sri Kantha
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## Preface

Nami

In the 50-year post-independence history of Sri Lanka - and in the history of Sinhala-Tamil relations - no year was to prove as definitive and path-breaking as the year 1977. That was the year when at a democratically-held island-wide elections, (not all elections held since then had adhered to democratic values), the Tamil voters in the North and East of the country announced their right to self-determination.

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), then the representative party of the Tamils, declared in its election manifesto:-

*"... What is the alternative now left to the nation that has lost its right to its language, rights to its citizenship, rights to its religions and continues day by day to lose its traditional homeland to Sinhalese colonisation? What is the alternative now left to a nation that has lost its opportunities to higher education through "standardisation" and its equality in opportunities in the sphere of employment? What is the alternative to a nation that lies helpless as it is being assaulted, looted and killed by hooligans instigated by the ruling race and by the security forces of the state? Where else is an alternative to the Tamil nation that gropes in the dark for its identity and finds itself driven to the brink of devastation?"*

*"There is only one alternative and that is to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that we alone shall rule over our land our forefathers ruled. Sinhalese imperialism shall quit our Homeland." The Tamil United Liberation Front regards the general election of 1977 as a means of proclaiming to the Sinhalese Government this resolve of the Tamil nation. ... Hence the TULF seeks in the General Election the mandate of the Tamil nation to establish an independent, sovereign, secular, socialist state of Tamil Eelam that includes all the geographically contiguous areas that have been the traditional homeland of the Tamil-speaking people in the country."*

In the course of a detailed statement, the manifesto further stated: -

*"The Tamil nation must take the decision to establish its sovereignty in its homeland on the basis of its right to self-determination. The only way to announce this decision to the Sinhalese government and to the world is to vote for the Tamil United Liberation Front. The Tamil-speaking representatives who get elected through these votes, while being members of the National State Assembly of Ceylon, will also form themselves into the National Assembly of Tamil Eelam which will draft a constitution for the state of Tamil Eelam and establish the independence of Tamil Eelam by bringing that constitution into operation either by peaceful means or by direct action or struggle."*

The result of the elections that followed were significant in a number of ways. The voter turn-out was a record 86.7%, believed to be the highest in any democratic election in the world. For the first time in the island's parliamentary history, a governing party was so humiliated that it failed to become even the largest opposition party; and what was more curious, the Tamil United Liberation Front having won 17 seats in the north and east, turned out to be the largest opposition party, ahead of Mrs Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party which was reduced to a rump of eight. But this paradoxically proved to be the political undoing of the Tamils.

**By accepting the post of leader of the Opposition (there was no parliamentary**



compulsion to do so, unless he fancied himself in the Whitehall tradition of being an alternative Prime Minister in waiting!), TULF leader Amirthalingam negated his own party's brave manifesto, and in the process helped to bury the mandate given by the Tamil people. His heading an opposition of 25 in a House with a solid phalanx of 139 members in the Government benches was anyway an excuse in futility. Speaking in Parliament on the 18th August 1977, in the wake of the anti-Tamil riot that followed the elections, he declared: "We are attacked yesterday, we are being attacked today, we will be attacked tomorrow also. The same situation will continue till we liberate ourselves." The statement sounded not only hollow but also pathetic.

This little monograph is a reproduction of some articles that appeared during that period in the Colombo weekly journal - The TRIBUNE - (now defunct) touching on two subjects - (1) The viability of a future Tamil Eelam, and (2) the mandate for Tamil Eelam in the General Elections of 1977. These took the form of a debate consequent to a series of four articles by TRIBUNE editor S.P. Amarasingam questioning the viability of Tamil Eelam and one by Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, Director, Centre for Society and Religions questioning the claim of a popular mandate for Tamil Eelam.

Mr. Amarasingam concluded his argument by saying: -

*"The TRIBUNE does not propose to labour the question of viability of Eelam anymore? That whilst leaving the columns of this paper open to anyone who wishes to argue (on a reasoned and factual basis only) about the viability of Eelam, TRIBUNE will in future go on the footing that the viability of Eelam is as much a myth as Eelam itself? That the country, and the Tamils in particular, have paid a heavy price because of myths like Fifty-Fifty and Eelam and the sooner these myths are forgotten the better?"*

Fr. Balasuriya on his part said:

*"Did the July elections give the TULF a mandate to demand or fight for Eelam? Definitely not", and he quoted statistics to make his point. This writer's response to both Mr. Amarasingam and Fr. Balasuriya appeared in the issue of TRIBUNE of October 15, 1977, in the form of a letter to the Editor, under the title "EELAM, PRIMARILY A STATE OF MIND".*

Also included here is a reply to Fr. Balasuriya by S. Sri Kantha (Satchi Sri Kantha, now in Japan) as well as Fr. Balasuriya's final response. Mr. R. Mahendra's complimentary reference to this writer was only one of several that reached me, both in person and through the post and telephone.

Although 22 years have passed by since these were published, the issues discussed therein continue to have bearing on the ensuing ethnic conflict and the Tamil national question, and hence the reason for this publication.

*S. Swamyapalan*

June 1999.



## **FACT OR FICTION?**

**Fr. Tissa Balasuriya**

Director, Centre For Society And Religion

**D**uring the last two weeks of August 1977 many in Sri Lanka lived agonizing days and nights amidst looting, arson and lawlessness. Gangs have beaten others, inflicted horrifying injuries and even resorted to manslaughter. All this was apparently due to racial animosities. As yet the full story, how it started, how it escalated, is not known.

According to official sources over a 100 have lost their lives. About 45,000 have left their homes, and moved to the North or to the East, or South. Houses, shops and residential lines have first been looted, then set ablaze.

The lines of division have once again gone deep into the hearts of people. Every act of communal violence is a blow to national unity. Man, woman or child chased away from home by physical blows or fear of injury. Hatred has been generated far and wide during the past few weeks.

Innocent children have lost a mother or a father. This is a price they will pay all their lives due to the communal hatred fanned by so many consciously or unconsciously. Bewildered children will for all the time remember the refugee camps - the only place of solace for their mother and father for uncomfortable days and nights, days of great privations.

But there is hope.

Men and women from all walks of life have begun to affirm themselves in favour of communal harmony. They call for a peaceful resolution of our racial problems. Leaders of all religions have appealed for peace and justice for all. The common humanity in us all is leading persons and groups of every political or religious persuasions to co-operate in safeguarding life and promoting understanding.

The intensity of this national tragedy has alerted us to the deep seated nature of the problems of race that confront us as a nation. They have grown gradually over the past 50 years or so. In the days of the Ceylon National Congress the leaders of all races worked for self-government and political independence. But shortly step by step the problems have got aggravated. The pan-Sinhala ministry of the 1930's, the demand for 50-50 by the Tamil Congress, the disenfranchisement of the plantation workers, the demand for federalism by the Federal Party, the Sinhalese Only Act with the provisions for the Reasonable Use of Tamil, the communal violence of 1958, the resistance by Sinhala Opposition Groups to Regional Councils and District Councils have all contributed to the present impasse. The Republican Constitution of 1972, the formation of the Tamil United (Liberation ) Front, and the demand for Eelam as separate sovereign State for Tamils are all stages in this history.

In the period 1970-77 the situation was more aggravated. The government did not face the issue squarely. Sinhala-Tamil relations during the past 50 years are a bad history of several lost opportunities. Often a workable solution was within grasp of leading political groups. On every occasion extreme views prevailed to the detriment of the nation as a whole. With each successive stage the Tamil demands increased.

## ANALYSIS OF VOTING

Jaffna Peninsula	Total Electorate	Absentees & Spoilt votes	Total Polled	% Polled	Majority	UNP LSSP	SLFP/	Independent	TULF	% of total ele- torates	Total polled %
79 Kayts	36,372	8,831	27,541	75.72	8,967	661		9,240	17,640	48.5	64
82 Manipay	41,373	8,571	32,802	79.28	24,250	3,300		1,952	27,550	66.6	85
85 Point Pedro	28,447	5,156	23,291	81.89	6,570			10,302	12,989	45.6	56
86 Chavakachcheri	36,959	5,302	31,657	85.65	9,218			11,629	20,028	54.2	64
91 Kankesanthurai	43,907	7,430	36,477	83.0	25,833			5,322	31,155	70.9	86
83 Kopay	41,824	8,354	33,470	80.0	22,353	2,699	3,487	1,444	25,840	61.8	77.2
88 Jaffna	34,865	6,164	28,701	32.3	9,271		LSSP	12,450	16,251	46.6	56.6
80 Vaadukoddai	40,684	7,363	33,321	81.9	18,208	480		9,457	23,384	57.5	70.1
87 Nallur	40,205	6,813	33,392	83.0	28,137		1,042	2,492	29,858	74.2	89.4
84 Udipiddy	36,955	6,372	30,583	82.7	14,747		SLFP	11,815	18,768	50.7	61.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>381,591</b>	<b>70,356</b>	<b>311,235</b>	<b>81.5</b>		<b>7,140</b>	<b>4,529</b>	<b>76,103</b>	<b>223,463</b>	<b>58.56</b>	<b>71.8</b>
<b>Mainland(Outside Peninsula)</b>											
89 Killinochchi	126,670	4,012	22,658	84.9	11,601	1,497	4006SLFP	148	15,607	58.5	68.9
90 Mannar	31,767	2,415	29,352	92.3	2,212	12,929	478	804	15,141	47.6	51.1
92 Vavuniya	28,450	5,034	23,416	82.3	4,377	9,444		151	13,821	48.6	59.0
91 Mullaitivu	24,698	5,102	19,597	79.3	2,629			9,335	10,261	41.5	52.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>111,585</b>	<b>16,563</b>	<b>95,022</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>2,379</b>	<b>23,870</b>	<b>4,484</b>	<b>10,438</b>	<b>54,830</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>57.7</b>
<b>Northern Province</b>	<b>493,176</b>		<b>86,919</b>	<b>406,257</b>	<b>82.5</b>			<b>278,293</b>		<b>56.4</b>	<b>68.5</b>



**It is necessary to examine the claim for a separatist Tamil Eelam? Did the July elections give the TULF a mandate to demand or fight for Eelam?. Definitely Not.**

Last week the voting analysis of July elections in the Northern and Eastern provinces (and Puttalam) were published together with some brief notes. This week a more detailed analysis is being published with more detailed notes. This is for the record and also to substantiate our argument. Some of the points made last week are being repeated. This is also for the record.

*Northern Province (a) in the Jaffna Peninsula* the TULF got a clear verdict in favour of it. The 10 electorates gave the TULF 223,463 votes out of its total 311,235 votes. Independents got 76,103 votes, UNP 7,140, LSSP 4,529, SLFP 1,042 in the Peninsula. Hence 71.8% of the votes were in favour of the TULF. This was 58.5% of the electorate. One could therefore argue that the Jaffna Peninsula responded positively to the TULF demand. Ten of its 18 seats in the National State Assembly are from the Peninsula. The absentees in the Jaffna Peninsula were 70,356 or 18.5% of the electorate. This is high compared to the national average of 87.2. The absentees are more than 1/5 of the number who voted in the elections.

*(b) In the rest of the Northern Province* in the Mainland the position is less clear though the TULF won in Killinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu. In *Killinochchi* it obtained 15,607 votes as against 4,006 for the SLFP and 1,499 for the UNP. In Mannar TULF obtained 15,141 votes while the UNP and Independents had 14,211 votes. The TULF got 930 votes more out of an electorate of 31,767 and a total poll of 29,352. This can hardly be a case for a separation of *Mannar* from the rest of the country. In *Vavuniya* the TULF polled 13,821 and the UNP 9,444 and an Independent 151. Though the TULF has 4,200 votes more than the other two it has only 48.6% of the total electorate due to the 5,034 absentees out of the total electorate of 28,450. In *Mullaitivu*, the TULF received 10,261 votes while the three Independent candidates together polled 9,335. The difference is 926 out of a total poll of 19,596 and an electorate of 24,698, 5,102 abstained from voting i.e., over a fifth of the electorate. Here too the case for separation is not unanimous. It is actively supported by a little over 41% of the electorate.

**Hence in the Northern Province, outside the Peninsula and Killinochchi less than half the electorate has voted for the TULF and 33,131 voted against it; while 12,548 abstained from voting out of a total of 83,915. The total poll in these three electorates is about 85% or less than the national average of 87.2%. Can this be a convincing case for separating the country specially with a frontier to be located within this area?**

In the Northern Province (a+b) as a whole 68.5% of the voters and 56.4% of the electorate were for the TULF i.e. 278,293 votes out of 406,257 voters and an electorate of 493,176. Abstentions and spoilt votes were 86,919 or 17.5% of the electorate. In the Northern Province 85% of the population is "Ceylon Tamil" and 95.4% is Tamil speaking. Hence even here that one third of the votes were against the TULF has some significance. It may be of interest that the vote for the UNP, SLFP and LSSP was 40,013 in the Northern Province. This is nearly 10% of the votes.

*(c) In the Eastern Province* the Elections results are clearly against separation. The UNP won eight seats; Sammanthurai, Kalkudah, Kalmunai, Seruwila, Batticaloa, (2nd), Amparai, Mutur and Potuvil (1st). The TULF won *Padiruppu*, Trincomalee and Batticaloa (1st) and Potuvil (2nd). The TULF would have lost in *Padiruppu* if not for the division of



## ANALYSIS OF VOTING

Eastern Province	Total Elect- rate	Absentees & Spoilt votes	Total %		Majority	UNP	SLFP	LSSP	FP	Ind.	TULF	% of total electorate	% Total polled
			Polled	Polled									
100 Samanturai	27,308	2,446	24,862	91	5,027	13,642	2,605				8,615	31.5	35
98 Paddiruppu	35,909	3,620	32,289	89	10,244	5,189	5,590	5,633			15,877	44.2	49
96 Kalidudah	33,995	4,753	29,242	86	545	13,140	3,507				12,595	37.0	43
94 Trinco	35,778	6,518	29,260	81.3	3,321	11,823	1,674			619	15,144	42.3	51.7
101 Kalmunai	28,826	2,922	25,904	89.8	5,543	12,636	5,922			253	7,093	24.6	27.3
93 Seruwila	31,250	5,313	25,937	83	4,359	14,926	10,567	392		52			
97 Batticaloa	63,039	9,094	53,944	70		12,672	16,536		11,221	191	13,324	21	30
99 Amparai	49,006	7,471	41,535	84	8,572	24,581	16,009	945					
95 Mutur	30,389	2,539	27,850	92	4,730	12,530	7,800				7,520	24.7	27
102 Potuvil	49,691	5,213	44,478	89.5		15,157	11,189			6,137	11,995	24.1	26.9
<b>Eastern Province</b>													
<b>Total</b>	<b>385,191</b>	<b>49,890</b>	<b>335,301</b>	<b>87.0</b>		<b>136,296</b>	<b>81,399</b>	<b>6,970</b>	<b>11,221</b>	<b>7,252</b>		<b>92,163</b>	<b>27.4</b>

votes amount the LSSP, SLFP and UNP which together got 16,412 votes as against 15,877 for the TULF.

In terms of votes the UNP had 136,296, TULF 92,163, SLFP 81,419, LSSP 6,970, FP (Batticaloa) 11,221 and Independents 7,252. The Independents have fared very badly indicating high political consciousness among those voting. The UNP, SLFP and LSSP which are definitely against separation obtained 224,665 votes or 67% of the votes and 58.3% of the electorate. The TULF had only 27.5% votes of the votes cast. Absentees were 49,792 or 12.9% votes of the total electorate. The Eastern province has clearly rejected the ideas of a separate state for the Tamil speaking people. Though 76.8% of the population are Tamils and Moors (Ceylon and Indian) only 27.5% voted for the TULF. Ceylon Tamils alone are 40.9% of the Eastern Province and even they have not voted as a whole for Eelam. The Sinhala population is only 22.5% of the population and hence they could not make for the bulk of the 69.9% that voted for the UNP, SLFP and LSSP which are definitely against the division of the country into two states.

**One would have expected the TULF to be quite sobered by this decision of the Tamil speaking people in the Eastern Province. They have definitely no mandate to claim the Eastern Province for a "Sovereign Eelam."**

*Northern and Eastern Province Together (a+b+c).* When we take the Northern and Eastern Provinces together, we see an important phenomenon. Within the *Jaffna Peninsula* 71.8% of the votes were for the TULF. In the electorates *Killinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu* 57.7% of the voters opted for TULF; and in the Eastern Province 28%. Taking both provinces together the TULF had 370,456 votes. This is 49.9% of the votes cast. **But as there were 136,711 absentees, the TULF vote is only 42.2% of the total electorate in the North and East.**

The voting pattern is 81.5% in the Peninsula, 85.1% in the four Northern electorates outside the Peninsula and 87.0% in the Eastern Province. The National average was 87.2%. If we therefore take the population of these two provinces together we can say that they have not voted as a whole positively for a separate State. Just about half the votes cast are for the TULF. But 57.8% have not voted for the TULF, i.e. including the absentees.

*In the Mainland and Northern Province and Eastern Province (b+c) excluding the Jaffna Peninsula* the electorate is 496,776, the voters were 430,323 and the TULF got 146,993 votes. The TULF obtained the support for only 34.1% of these votes and 29.6% of the electorate there. Unlike in the Jaffna Peninsula where only 81.5% voted, in the mainland North and East 86.1% went to the polls. The TULF is in a minority position outside the Jaffna Peninsula even in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. 65.9% of the votes in this area from Killinochchi to Pottuvil were against the TULF.

*(d) Puttalam Electorate* The Puttalam electorate touches Mannar in the North, and has nearly 20% Ceylon Tamils, 38.4% Ceylon Moors and 2.9% Indian Tamils and Moors. Hence 61% of the population are Moors and Tamils. The TULF toyed with the ideas of attracting the people of this electorate to its fold. But the TULF obtained only 3,268 votes out of 31,070 voters in an electorate of 37,177. This is 10.5% of the votes and 8.8% of the electorate. Hence even the 20% Ceylon Tamils here have not voted TULF. This is an indication that Tamil speaking people outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces reject the proposal for Eelam.

*Point of view*

If the Puttalam area is also taken into account the vote for the TULF in Puttalam, the Northern and Eastern Provinces is 373,724. This is 48.36% of the voters and 40.8% of the electorate. Hence in the whole area claimed for the Eelam less than half the vote has been for the TULF. ■





TO THE EDITOR

## **Tribune and Eelam**

**By S.Sivanayagam**

*Sir,*

I have been in recent weeks a regular reader of *Tribune*. This is not to say that I was unacquainted with *Tribune* journalism in the past. It is simply that being a person not blessed with regular habits, I had failed to keep a date with your journal week after week, over the years.

But I had known *Tribune* long enough to say this: - Firstly, to sustain a Journal of this kind over a period of several years with hardly any advertising to help, is a singular achievement in itself. Secondly, the notable service you have been extending to the middle class, English-reading public, as a sober review and a journal of opinion is Inestimable. Public opinion in our country as someone said, is mostly expressed in private. *Tribune*, unlike daily newspapers, being mercifully free of vested interests and thankfully immune from political vagaries and changes of ownership, has kept a steady course like the Mahaweli, except for a permissible diversion here and there. But the fact that it has in some measure contributed towards the expression of public opinion In **public**, and helped give respectability to the Voltaire dictum- "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" - places *Tribune* in the upper shelf of Journalism in this country.

**Thirdly, Sir - but this I am afraid is not going to be very complimentary. *Tribune* for all its maturity and amiability, has not always succeeded in rising above certain fixations or ridding itself of some blind spots. One of your steady fixations of course has been the Left; and one of your blind spots has been the Federal Party, now the TULF.**

Twenty five years ago, when the late Mr. Frank Moraes retired as Editor-in-chief of the *Times of Ceylon*, a group of distinguished citizens arranged a farewell dinner for him at the Galle Face Hotel. The late Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who was then Leader of the House in Parliament, proposed an eloquent toast to the chief guest. He said that they (the politicians) knew what to expect from a *Ceylon Daily News* editorial on any given subject. But when they turned the pages of the *Times of Ceylon*, they did so with trepidation, not knowing what the editorial would say. That paper, under the stewardship of Mr. Moraes, had the disconcerting habit of treating every question on its own merits! Well, *Tribune* does have that admirable quality of independent thinking, except that when it comes to the Left, it shows a fond-motherly reluctance to admonish. But when it comes to the FP or TULF, it displays tremendous freedom in smacking Mr. Amirthalingam's bottom. In other words, it was always possible to predict with certainty what *Tribune* would say about the FP, whatever the FP said or did.

**Let me make my position clear. Mr. Amirthalingam has never been my favourite politician. Nor was Dr. Colvin R. de Silva. And between ourselves and the gate post, I was not particularly fond of the political style of Mr.J.R. Jayawardene himself, in the past. But during the past one month, my assessment of all three has improved appreciably. Mr. Jayawardene's speech at the National State Assembly the**

other day, is, in my thinking the first one. In our near thirty years of freedom that has made a Sri Lankan Prime Minister look ten feet tall! And over the radio, it sounded so intimate, so spontaneous, and so off-the-cuff, that the BBC itself could not have organised a better "fire-side chat" with one of their Prime Ministers, for the air. In fact, it was a rare instance in the history of that Torrington Square establishment when it gave its listeners excellent radio. That it was completely unintended need not matter. It proved an effective take-off point for those mass media experts who talk pretty Jargon, but have neither imagination nor courage to give practical shape to the art of communication.

**Talking of assessments - journalists, editors and leaders of opinion have a great responsibility to see that they do not carry with them frozen evaluations of men who are constantly in the public eye. They have to be constantly assessed on performance. That is the only way qualitative changes in leadership styles could be brought about; and that is the only way again, the Fourth Estate in this country could win back its lost credibility.**

Credibility Sir, is not a virtue one is born with. It has to be earned. And earned over a period of time. It is no use getting behind an important fact. The FP, now the TULF, has more credibility in the eyes of a sizeable section of the Tamil people than its denigrators in the newspapers. One of the most crowded bandwagons in the political circus of this country is the anti-FP-TULF bandwagon. Government Politicians in the past took constant rides on it. When they ran out of speeches, they had only to take a swipe at the Federal Party. When newspaper editors, columnists, cartoonists, Lobby correspondents and even small-time humorists are faced with the problem of filling up space, they simply turn their guns on the FP. It was easy. Easy, because they are fully committed against, even before they start thinking. And so safe too. So much so that a policeman thought it would cost him nothing to butt the Leader of the Opposition from behind, as it happened recently in Jaffna in the presence of a superior officer!

**It is viewed against this back-ground, that your laboured serial exercises on the question: "is Eelam viable?" do not carry much credibility. Your resting heavily on Fr. Tissa Balasuriya's research does not help either, in gaining an insight into contemporary Tamil thinking. Speaking basically, statistics are a poor substitute for empathy and understanding, especially when the problem is one that involves humans-their feelings their fears, their tensions, their aspirations, even their foibles and antagonism. Moreover, statistics is malleable material. It all depends whether the researcher-statistician is making an honest search for truth or whether, he is in search of a predetermined conclusion. Handled with finesse, even the same set of statistics could be made to yield different results. Or what is worse. One could select only those that are obedient to one's purpose. May I illustrate?**

A Sunday newspaper recently carried a Page 1 story under the headline "Communal politics on the decline". Even granting the traditional superficial assumption that communal politics is found only in the North and East, the headline shook me up a bit, for it seemed contrary to direct experience. As D. H. Lawrence used to say. I did not feel the truth of it in my solar plexus. Now here, the researcher who wrote the story starts his research with the July 1960 elections, and reaches the conclusion that the FP-TULF vote has declined since. Had he instead chosen the elections of 1952 as his starting point, it would have led him to the opposite conclusion! Let us see how. At the elections of 1952 (prior to the "Sinhala Only" Act and therefore a more rational starting point), the



UNP and its then election partner, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress which stood for a unitary Ceylon, won 43.727% of the vote in the Northern Province, While in the Eastern Province the UNP by itself won 40.99% of the vote. As against this, the Federal Party won only 22.38% of the vote in the Northern Province, with its late respected leader Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam himself beaten by a UNP nominee at Kankesanthurai.

In the Eastern Province, the Federal Party managed a meagre 4.37% of the vote. Now place these against Fr. Balasuriya's figures of the 1977 elections. In the Northern Province, the TULF walks away with 68.5% of the vote, and in the Eastern Province they secure 27.5%, despite the fact that the Sinhalese population in the Eastern Province has now grown to 22.5%.

In other words, the TULF has increased its support threefold In the Northern Province over a period of 25 years, while in the Eastern Province it has increased its support six-fold, despite State-aided colonisation disturbing the traditional ethnic composition. How's that Sir, for statistics? And how's that for this so-called decline In "communal politics"?

**It is also possible in this matter of fragmented research to slip into easy assumptions. Fr. Tissza Balasuriya for example has come to the facile conclusion that "Tamil-speaking people outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces reject the proposal for Eelam". Now, how did he get that? Did anybody ask them?** Nearly 25% of the Tamils by descent, who consider the North and East as their traditional permanent homelands (barring a negligible percentage that has lost its roots there) had their votes outside these two provinces. If one were to assume that an overwhelming number out of this 25% voted for the UNP at the last elections, it was probably because they expected a more equitable deal under a UNP administration headed by Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, than under the SLFP. How does that vote amount to a rejection of Eelam? Isn't it an untested assumption?

Apart from all these, there is a new factor, which makes election statistics a little out of date. As we all know, a lot of water has flowed down the Kelani within the one month after the elections. Over 100,000 Tamils were directly affected by the anti-Tamil riots. About 25,000 of those who were living outside the North and East are now seeking resettlement in those areas. Lakhs of others who were fortunate not to be directly affected by the August madness, are themselves going through a state of catharsis. Statistics of those who lost their lives and the lives of the bread-winners, and lost their hard-earned wealth and property do not reflect the true measure of the feelings of bewilderment, disillusionment and the pervasive shattering of the morale of a whole community. There is in fact a new, dramatic switch in thinking among the Tamils throughout the island. Which no statistics can reveal.

**Let us now leave statistics in the dust-bins where they belong, and take a look at the patterns of political behaviour. Isn't it an interesting fact that when the Sinhalese voter has changed his mind with ever single election since 1952. the Tamil voter in the North and East has in direct contrast, kept on sending the same political party unchanged, for the Sixth Consecutive time over a period of 21 Years?**

Isn't it funny on the other hand that politicians and editors, researchers and statisticians, men who respect the people's verdict otherwise, should keep on making a fine distinction between the Tamil voter and the men whom he votes for? Any African ostrich will marvel at this performance! This in fact, holds the key to this knotty "Tamil problem"



remaining unsolved over the years. A stubborn refusal to understand the Tamil mind.

If you ask me Sir, this is not a Tamil problem. The problem is in the South. One should develop the honesty and courage to come to terms with the *raison d'être* of the FP and the TULF, instead of constantly airing the now shop spoilt argument that the majority of the Tamils think differently from their elected leaders. Maybe, the pronounced individualistic traits in the Tamil, particularly the Hindu, encourages this illusion. The Hindus have a whole repertory of jokes about the very Gods whom they worship. Differences of opinion with their leaders are therefore not to be taken too literally. I suspect that in a group of 100 card-carrying members of the TULF there must be a 100 opinions on any given matter, if not 101!

The votes-might sometimes get split not on the question of Eelam, but as to who is more qualified to campaign for it. **It is useful to recall that the Federal Party stalwart who first pressed the case for separation got sacked from the party for his trouble!** He is Mr. V. Navaratnam, once the FP MP for Kayts. Contesting the same seat at the recent elections he managed to get 8,673 votes against the TULF winner, which is more than, say, what a senior politician like Mr. T. B. Subasinghe got in Katugampola, and double the number of votes Mr. C. Kumarasuriyar got in Killinochchi.

And yet, for all we know, innocent researchers must be bundling these 8,673 votes of an Independent but pioneer Eelam man also into the anti-Eelam vote! (Having written this, I made a quick tot-up of the total of the Eelam vote as given by Fr. Balasuriya and found my suspicions justified. Either by oversight or ignorance, Fr. Balasuriya has made it out that Mr. V. Navaratnam is opposed to Eelam). **What a fate for a man who was two steps ahead of the FP! But this incidentally illustrates another aspect of Tamil politics. The shift from Federalism to separation as a basic objective did not happen in a hurry. But what is more rib-tickling in Fr. Balasuriya's research (Tribune: Oct. 1) is his neat disposal of Mr. Kasi Ananthan's votes in Batticaloa (11,232) as non-Eelam votes. As Eelam propagandist Mr. Kasi Ananthan is several shades fiercer than Mr. Amirthalingam!**

Public memory being short, and popular ignorance being colossal in the political life of our country, it would be useful also to recall the pertinent fact that the first communal party that raised its flag was the Sinhala Maha Sabha. That was way back in 1937. The founder of course was the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, later to become the father of the social revolution of 1956. Mr. Bandaranaike nursed his organisation so carefully that he did not disband it even after he was elected a Vice-President of the UNP! It was only after he walked out of the UNP in July 1951 that the Sinhala Maha Sabha was formally dissolved, and in its place was born the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The present US Ambassador in Sri Lanka, Mr. Howard Wriggins, who made a point of this in his admirable book. *"Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation"* published in 1960 says:- "... as late as four years after the formation of the UNP the Sinhala Maha Sabha was holding annual sessions...." The change from the Sinhala Maha Sabha to Sri Lanka Freedom Party was a change in nomenclature only to all real intents and purposes but it was a change designed to have far reaching consequences. **From that point onwards, the exclusive aspirations of the Sinhala-Buddhist people were given a national frame, and a national perspective. That fiction of a "national" party has been successfully maintained to this day, with practically the whole country believing in it,**



aided in its time with various props like "Socialism". "The age of the common man", "Social revolution". Minister Kumarasuriyar, Non-alignment, etc. etc.

The fiction was so ably popularised that even the Left movement itself was forced to crumble before it. The Left debacle in Sri Lanka did not begin in 1977 as is popularly believed, but in 1960.

The SLFP's sweeping triumph in 1956, followed by the promulgation of the "Sinhala Only" Act, and the subsequent elevation of Buddhism as the "official" religion, have fulfilled the purposes for which the Sinhala Maha Sabha was founded originally. None will question the right of the Sinhala-Buddhist people to have their aspirations realized, but to seek that fulfilment at the expense of the racial and religious minorities-because they happen to be smaller in numbers - looks like the act of an eldest brother making a grab for the entire patrimony left by his dead (colonialist) father and arrogating to himself the right to dole what he thinks is reasonable (according to his mood), for the worldly requirements of his younger brothers and sisters.

In other words, Sir, you the Editor of Tribune, Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, and this poor writer are all in the same boat. The portions we get in life might differ in quantity among the three of us, but we are all on the dole anyway. No individual or ethnic or religious group could ever hope to realize full personality or attain the zenith on one's potential while living on a dole. Isn't that the very basis of the argument against colonialism? **If anyone thinks the Tamils had a bigger dole under the British masters, well, there was something to be said for it. The dole was at least in accordance with merit, performance and diligence and hard work. and not according to parentage, and political pull.**

As individuals Sir, the Sinhalese are a very generous and hospitable people. As a Tamil, I have no hesitation in owning that. They can afford to be so too, because life's rewards come to them more easily. To the Jaffna peasant and farmer to whom Nature itself is inhospitable, it calls for an effort even to be generous. During my early schooling in a village school in Jaffna, I remember how some of my less fortunate classmates had to do a daily 2-hour stint in their farm before they wash up, collect their books and have the luxury of a school education.

What is important for the resolving of social tensions, is not what percentage of people voted for Eelam and what percentage did not. It is a pointless exercise. If you consider Eelam a foolish cry, then it remains a foolish cry whether 25% vote for it or 75% vote for it. The only difference is in the percentage of foolishness. What is important is not whether Eelam is an economic proposition in the eyes of *Tribune* and me. Nothing is a sound economic proposition before it is born, not even an excellent durable journal like the *Tribune*.

Israel in the desert was not a sound economic proposition before it was born, let alone being a military proposition. After all Sir, Sri Lanka after 29 years of freedom on a plate and the generous patrimony of Tea, Rubber and Coconut is still not a sound economic proposition! What is important is not the defining of territory at this point of time and publishing Eelam maps to scale. Separation of a country, like divorce in a family, is not a happy, pleasant affair, and certainly not desirable under normal conditions. But yet divorces occur - very often to the relief of both parties. As to a squabble whether the husband takes the wardrobe or the wife takes the dressing table, it is again not a



pretty sight. But that is subsidiary to the whole question of divorce. Defining territorial limits is the same. It is the final page in a whole chapter of confusion and recrimination.

**What is important is not whether Tea earns foreign exchange while onions won't. The flaw in this thinking is in the arguing against a futuristic situation in terms that are static and contemporary. If Tea and Rubber happen to be earning foreign exchange, it is not because there is something special about Tea and Rubber that chillies don't have. Gearing products for export is merely an act of human design. There was no Tea and Rubber during the glorious days of Parakrama Bahu the Great. Tea and Rubber was part of the colonial patrimony that was left to us. It was the product of British capital and enterprise, and Tamil labour and sweat. But already, in the pace of Tea production, we are losing to Kenya, North East India and South India. While our crop in the first six months of 1977 recorded an increase of 11.2 kg. as compared with the same period last year, North India recorded an increase of 14.4 kg., Kenya 18.6kg. and South India 18.9 kg! (People's Bank Research Dept. Economic Review July 1977).**

In this big, wide world where there is always something that one part of it lacks that the other has, there is nothing traditional about export orientation and export ingenuity. Kenya which has been exporting camels to Saudi Arabia for the past few years was planning to earn \$ 500,000 in foreign exchange this year. Until recently India was earning appreciable foreign exchange in exporting Monkeys to the US! Little Cyprus which has a bare 8% of its cultivable land in grapes was the third largest supplier of wine to Britain, three years ago. According to an FAO report, there is sweet profit to be made from exporting honey. There is a world honey shortage, and prices rose from \$ 300 a tonne in 1969 to \$ 1,000 in 1975. Mango, the king of fruits is becoming a big money spinner for India. According to preliminary official estimates made early last year, exports of mango, mango slices, juice, jams, chutneys and pickles was to fetch the country nearly Rs. 10 crores (Rs. 100 million) in 1976. **After all, no one expected Jaffna to grow grapes fifteen years ago.**

**The point I am trying to make Sir, is that, Eelam, like happiness and sorrow, hope and despair, conviction and doubt, is primarily a state of mind. One can't argue it away by statistics, polemics and threats, or wish it away by whistling in the dark. The one important thing is to recognize a historical process, a process in which even leaders of nations and leaders of parties become irrelevant.**

Prime Minister Mr. J. R. Jayawardene himself, a leader with courage, with all the resources of a State machinery at his command, with all the tanks and guns at his disposal, matched by his genuine anxiety to put down violence and protect the Tamils, could do nothing to prevent the shattering of the lives and nerves, the hopes and wealth of 3 million law-abiding citizens.

After all, what big force was he against? Mere rabbles of probably 3 thousand hoodlums. Hoodlums are also people, with normal desires and hopes and fears and aspirations. They were so mighty because they represented the external manifestation of a much bigger, all powerful force- a historical force. **If you say that TULF leaders make stupid speeches, well, what of it? Did it help the Tamils when Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam spoke little or made sensible speeches?** The very people who brought Mr. J. R. Jayawardene to power on the tidal wave of an unprecedented electoral victory could do nothing to protect him from an equally unprecedented embarrassment one month later.

**Or didn't they WANT TO?** ■





REPLY TO FR.BALASURIYA

## Tamil Mandate for Eelam

By S Sri Kantha

In the article on Tamil Mandate for Eelam by Fr.Tissa Balasuriya (*Tribune* of 24.9.77). I have to draw attention to some wrong inferences made by the Reverend Father in his analysis. As he himself had noted in his article that it is subject to correction, I am sure the Father will take my comments in the spirit they are made.

Firstly, the learned Father should not have depended on the expected figures (like the total electorate), to reach his conclusions, for instance the TULF votes as a percentage of the total electorate. In a democratic system of election, we simply cannot expect 100 percent polling, and there would also be "abstentions". Only in countries like UAR, USSR and so on, we find the President-elect polling 99.99 percent of the votes. There, they do not even divulge the names of the candidates who contest the ready-made presidents. Here in Sri Lanka we adopt an open-ballot system, where we are yet to witness a 100 percent polling, in the elections.

In an electoral list that has been compiled in June 1975, how can we expect every single individual to cast his vote on July 21, 1977. I would like to point out that, within this intervening two-year period, a certain number of people must have died, a certain number of people would have gone abroad; a certain number of people would have been incarcerated; a certain number of people would have become invalids due to old age; a certain number of people would have become premature invalids, due to the high cost of living and other reasons: a certain number of people would have been displaced. All these numbers would have missed their opportunities to exercise their civic rights. Therefore I feel that, it is a not correct to categorise all their people as mere abstentions. Hence, the abstentions and spoilt votes should not be taken into account, when calculating the popularity vote of TULF, i.e, TULF votes as a percentage of the total electorate.

Secondly, how did the Father come to the assumption that 1/5th of the Peninsular population which have not voted, are anti-TULF? Has he received written statements from these 131,711 abstentions that all of them are anti-TULF? Can he vouch for this? I am of the opinion that only a minor of fraction of this had deliberately abstained from voting for the TULF and that the rest had not been able to cast their votes owing to one more of the above mentioned possibilities.

Thirdly, it seems that, the learned Father had been ignorant of the happenings in the NP during the campaign period of the Election. To enlighten him, I wish to point out that, not only the TULF, but also some other unrecognised parties, and some independent candidates asked the voters a mandate for Tamil Eelam. The votes polled by the other elements are given below for the sake of information.

"Thamilar Suya Aatchi Kazhagam" (Tamil Self-Rule party) led by Mr V Navartnam, a dissident FP member, who contested the Kayts seat. This party collected altogether 10, 740 votes. Please refer to sun (16.6.77) for this party s pledge to Tamil Eelam.

"Tamil Eela G. G. Congress", a mushroom party led by Mr V. Kumaraswamy (ex - MP for Chavakahcheri) who contested the Chavakahcheri seat. This unrecognised party attracted 10,810 votes in its favour.



### *Wrong Inferences*

TULF - "rebel" candidates, who when rejected by the TULF Nomination Committee came forward as independents, also carried the placard of Tamil Eelam. The votes polled by these candidates are as follows :

<b>Mr Veeravagu (Ind. Point Pedro)</b>	<b>3,065 votes</b>
<b>Mr Sandrasegari (Ind. Mullaitivu)</b>	<b>7,632 votes</b>
<b>Mr John Mark (Ind. Manner)</b>	<b>663 votes</b>
<b>Mr Satha Nadaraja (Ind. Chavakachcheri)</b>	<b>111 votes</b>

Another candidate in this category, was Mr G. G. Kumar Ponambalam (Ind. Jaffna), who polled 6,960 votes. He also claimed that the votes cast for him " could also be counted as the votes for a separate Tamil State" (vide Sun 7.6.11). Although in the later stages of the campaign, Mr. Ponnambalam criticised the stand of the TULF and there was a sort of repugnance on his part, he did not repudiate the news report of Sun.

**All these anti-TULF votes, were in fact Pro-Eelam votes (although these TULF opponents failed to win any seat!). The learned Father had nevertheless concluded that "one third of the votes was against the TULF and that has some significance." It is a wrong inference by any point of view. When an impartial analysis on the "Tamil Mandate for Eelam " is made, even these votes polled by the candidates (not representing TULF) for the cause of Eelam, have to be taken into account.**

Fourthly, in the Eastern province, the FP candidate- a young poet Mr Kasi Anandan, as all Tamils know, was the official 2nd TULF nominee for the Batticaloa constituency. Hence, his votes also should be added to the TULF votes making up a total of 103,384 votes for the TULF in the EP and not 92,163 as depicted in the chart presented by the Father.

When analysing the electoral verdict of the Eastern Province on the whole, it will be better to understand the crux of the deepening problem the TULF had to face in the Eastern Province (which did not exist in the Northern Province. The TULF s manifesto itself is self explanatory regarding colonisation. (It is heartening to see in the UNP's manifesto that solution will be found for this problem, but who is there to answer for the damage done , during the last thirty years?) This has altered the voters' representation in several areas in the EP within the last three decades.

**To quote the relevant portion from the TULF manifesto. "..... The Eastern Province where, when the British left in 1948 there were hardly a 10,000 Sinhalese, is now flooded with some 180,000 Sinhalese people. The extent of this damage to the political power and influence the Tamils is reflected in the newly created parliamentary constituencies of Amparai and Seruvila, which have engulfed some 1,500 square miles of Tamil territory. And this constitutes a 2/5th of the land area Eastern Province " (Tribune Aug. 6, 1977).**

Amparai (the name itself is changing and now it is widely used as Ampara) electorate was carved out in 1960; and Seruvila in 1977. It should be recollected that in 1947, 1952 and 1956, all seven electorates in EP returned Tamil-speaking candidates. In 1960, 1965 and 1970 of the nine electorates one returned a Sinhalese member. Now in 1977 of the 10 electorates, two had returned two Sinhala members.

These two "Sinhala" electorates where not contested by the TULF Neither the UNP nor the SLFP -nominated Tamil speaking candidates for these electorates, although,



Seruvila has 33 % Tamil -speaking population (Amparai has a mere 4% Tamil -Speaking population due to these two reasons, the votes polled in these two electorates should be deleted from the figures of the EP when making an impartial analysis for the mandate of Tamil Eelam. I sincerely hope the learned Father will concede this point.

When taking a count of the total votes polled in the EP (excluding Amparai and Seruvila for the reasons cited above). TULF tops the list with 103,384 votes; followed by UNP with 96,789 votes; with 96,789 votes SLFP with 54,823 votes; LSSP with 5,663 votes. Hence it can be seen party- wise, TULF had polled more than the UNP in the Tamil-Speaking electorates of EP.

I leave it to those who read this article (as well as the previous one of mine which appeared in *Tribune* earlier) to arrive at their own conclusions whether TULF had got the mandate for Eelam or not.

At this juncture, I am constrained to make some comments also, on the speech of Mr. M. 1. M. Aboosally (UNP MP for Balangoda) reported in the Hansard (23rd Aug. 1977). Analysing and working out the votes cast, for TULF at the last General Election, Aboosally has stated:

“Even If they had received 50% of the votes, they represent only 50% of the Indian and Ceylon Tamil population in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, which works out to 575,000 people. 575,000 of 3 million is less than 20 percent of the Tamil- speaking people in this country,”

Mr. Aboosally seems to think that all the 3 million Tamil-speaking people had the voting rights in the last General Election. It's not so. Three million is the population; but the number of Tamil voters is about half. To illustrate the point-further, the population of Sri Lanka is nearly 13 million. But the estimated number of voters is 6.6 million only, so, Aboosally's arithmetic is wrong there.

**Similarly, Mr. Aboosally's statement, “I would like to tell you that the TULF actually represents less than 20% of the Tamil-speaking people of this country”, will not hold water, because on this same kind of logic, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene cannot claim to be the PM of the entire Sri Lanka, as the UNP had polled only 51.2% of the voters total population.**

If we accept Mr. Aboosally's argument JRJ is the PM only for 51.2% of the population; Mrs. B is the PM for 30% of the population; Amirthalingam is the PM for 6.4% of the population; N. M. Perera is the PM for 3.6% of the population; Pieter Keuneman is the PM for 1.9% of the population, Thondaman is the PM for 1.0% of the population and so on.

What a fallacy?

Before concluding my article, I just want to comment on another point where wrong impressions might have been created in the minds of the readers after perusing the learned Father's analysis. In the first State Assembly, there were 19 elected Tamil representatives and 15 of them boycotted the Constituent Assembly in 1972. There were only 8 elected Muslim representatives. Included in this number were, members like Mr. I. A. Cader (ex-MP for Beruwela), who represented a majority Sinhala electorate, and hence not representing solely, the interests of the minority community he belonged to.

Even if we accept the fact that, these 8 Muslim members accepted the Republican Constitution, then altogether 12 elected members representing the minority Interests had

### *Wrong Inferences*

accepted the Constitution, whereas 15 of them had not accepted it. Hence, we have to come to a conclusion that, on a majority decision the Republican Constitution of 1972 was rejected by the Tamil-speaking people. This Constitution which was unilaterally imposed in May 1972, by Mrs. B's Government, took away even the meagre safeguards for minorities, provided in the Soulbury Constitution. (It is interesting to find Comrade Colvin shedding crocodile tears now and expressing doubts about the UNP's credibility, regarding this Issue). And the refusal to include even the meager safeguards of the Soulbury Constitution in the Republican Constitution of 1972 was the most important cause for the demand for Eelam. ●

## REPLY

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*Sir,*

Mr. A. C. Joseph finds fault with my article on the Tamil mandate for Eelam.

As I mentioned in my article, if my data or analysis is wrong I am subject to correction. Thus I accept a comment made by a writer in the *Sunday Times*. It does not, however, change the substance of my argument. If Mr. Joseph will show where I am wrong, I shall correct myself. If he only insinuates that my article is not "reasoned and unprejudiced," it does not add much light to the question.

Surely it is not unfair to the Tamils to try to understand what their voting pattern indicates. The demand for Eelam is a serious issue and as such merits study and reflection. It concerns and affects us all. May I mention that the title "Fact or Fiction" was not from me. The second part of my article giving positive suggestions appeared in the *Sunday Times* on 25th September.

The Issues of race are sensitive and delicate. Let us try to deal with them as objectively and fairly as possible even while we may bear within ourselves limitation of this accident of birth and of our own consequent cultural and social conditioning. ●

**Tissa Balasuriya O.M.I.**

281, Deans Road,  
Colombo 10,  
13.10.77





## **Fr. Tissa Balasuriya's Eelam Analysis**

*Sir,*

It is with deep interest, I read M r. S. Sivanayagam's communication to the Editor on 'Tribune and Eelam' which appeared in the October 15<sup>th</sup> issue of *Tribune*. I would be very much pleased, If you'll permit me to make a few relevant observations in regard to Fr. Tissa Balasuriya's approach on the Eelam verdict.

I am in total agreement with Mr. Sivanayagam, in pointing out that resting heavily on Fr. Tissa Balasuriya's research does not help, in gaining an insight into contemporary Tamil thinking". It is with deep regret I have to convey you, Mr. Editor that the learned Father T.B. shows lack of insight and perspective, of an objective student of current political affairs, which may be characterised as the natural weakness of contemporary historians (as, well as, political scientists) in Sri Lanka, observed by what is known as partisan spirit. How else can I come to a conclusion, when observing the sort of inference he puts forward like "the TULF would have lost in Paddiruppu if not for the division of votes amount the LSSP, SLFP and UNP which together got 16,412 votes as against 15,877 for the TULF". This sort of 'shabby-slanting' doesn't reflect his intellectual calibre. We have to infer for an impartial analysis from the realities which had occurred, and not from mere illusions.

By using the same yardstick the learned Father T.B. had used, I also can Infer the following: that UNP would have lost four of the seats (Kalmunai, Kalkudah. Muttur and Batticaloa (2), In the EP if not for the division of votes among the TULF, SLFP and LSSP, Most significant example is the two-member Batticaloa seat, where SLFP nominated two candidates, and both of them polled a total of 16,536: UNP candidate could attract only 12,672 voters. By virtue of votes being splitted between its candidates, SLFP 'missed the bus' and UNP gained by it. Coming again to the TULF victory in Paddiruppu, two points make Interesting observation, which I submit to Fr.TB to take a note of It.

(1) It is in Paddiruppu, the highest majority in the EP (10,244) and the only one above 10,000 mark had been recorded.

(2) TULF regained this seat from UNP, after losing it in 1970. The gentlemen who won this seat for UNP then, contested this time on the SLFP label and came 3rd; the UNP candidate was placed last in a four-cornered contest. ●

**S. Sri Kantha**

*Colombo.*

*15.10.77*

## **Eelam - Is it Viable?**

*Sir,*

**M**r Sivanayagam in his letter published in your issue of 15th October has taken the mickey out of you in intelligent, fastidious and trenchant prose. His letter will open many people's eyes to connections of cause and effect which they had overlooked or wilfully ignored. He has not spared anybody - not even the late Mr S W R D Bandaranaike. It is effortless Pelmanism and I must say first class public relations for the TULF. It is the sort of speech, the old messianic message- which should have been made in Parliament by the leader of the Opposition. Even now it is not too late - when an opportunity presents itself, the TULF leader is well advised to table this letter in Parliament for purposes of permanent record.

**R Mahendra**

*78, 1<sup>st</sup> Cross Street*

*Jaffna*

*19th October 1977*



A REPLY

## Statistics and Eelam

Sir,

I am grateful that the *Tribune* provides a unique weekly Forum for a public dialogue on the questions of race in Sri Lanka.

In recent issues there have been comments by Mr. Sri Kantha and Mr. S. Sivanayagam on my article on the Election results and the demand for Eelam.

**I grant that statistics are not everything and that insight, perspective, empathy, understanding are even more important.** However, after a General Election it is not wise to neglect the electoral results in terms of votes also. After all, the TULF campaigned intensely for an electoral mandate as its manifesto, speeches and subsequent reactions show. Empathy and insight are important. Let us all try to cultivate these for understanding the Tamil case, as well as those of the other communities specially of the very poor in the villages, plantations and urban areas.

**I agree with Mr. Sivanayagam since the August 1977 communal violence, a review of the position since August 77 is also welcome.** Here too the reaction of Tamil opinion is not all on one side. They are more hurt, specially in mind. But the only consequence is not that the TULF Eelam demand is further strengthened. Some others are now more convinced that the Eelam demand is more impractical and can cause more harm than good. In evaluating the new situation after August 77, we should not omit the fund of good will that has been generated after these shameful and unfortunate events. In our travels round the country to promote national harmony we have found almost everywhere a desire to settle this issue amicably once and for all. This is quite different from the position in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.

Coming to the analysis of votes, Mr. Sivanayagam asks how I concluded "Tamil speaking people outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces rejected the proposal for Eelam." My article appeared in two forms in the *Tribune*, on 24th Sept and 1st October 1977. The earlier one was taken from an abridged version in the *Sunday Times*. The latter of 1/10/77 gives the full argument as a comment on the Puttalam Elections which is outside the North and East and which the TULF contested. My comment was as follows:

"The TULF toyed with the idea of attracting the people of the electorate to its fold. But the TULF obtained only 3,268 votes out of 31,070 voters in an electorate of 37,177. This is 10.5% of the votes and 8.8% of the electorate. Hence, even the 20% Ceylon Tamils here have not voted TULF. This is an indication that the Tamil-speaking people outside Northern and Eastern Provinces reject the proposal for Eelam.

I said this is an indication. I do not think this is an invalid conclusion. I am not positively affirming that the Tamils outside North and East rejected Eelam, but the Puttalam, results point in the direction. Here there was a definite chance to test the issues. Perhaps there are several variables involved here and it may or may not be justifiable to extrapolate the argument. Yet this is worth looking into. I am sure the TULF will think twice before wanting to test its strength in Puttalam again.

I am grateful to Mr. S. Sri Kantha for the detailed information regarding the smaller





party groupings in Jaffna. Already the case presented by me indicated a very high percentage vote for the TULF in Jaffna. The addition of all the votes suggested by him would mean, about 40,000 more votes to the 278,293 of the TULF in favour of Eelam. There is no doubt that the Northern Province voted pro TULF. However I may also what a Tamil friend of mine wrote to me. Not all the votes for TULF are necessarily pro-Eelam. Some voted for TULF due to the personal qualities of the candidates. Some others did not want "Eelam", but wanted to strengthen the TULF in an eventual negotiating position in Parliament to redress Tamil grievances. I grant there are imponderables in this situation. I did not question the strong TULF support in the Northern province.

Concerning absentees in the North, I did not say "that 1/5 th. of the Peninsular Population which have not voted, are anti TULF" as Mr. Sri Kantha attributes to me (Tribune 22/10/77). I noted the high percentage of absentees who are "more than 1/5th of the number who voted in the elections." Hence Mr. S. Sri Kantha is opposing something which I did not claim. But I am sure he would not object to my noting the high absenteeism in the North as one Mr. S Sri Kantha (presumably the same person) invoked the low level of voting in Colombo West, Colombo East and Borella to focus attention on the absenteeism there, probably of Tamil Votes! (Tribune 8/10/77)

**Eastern Province.** Concerning the Eastern Province the arguments are about the vote of Mr. Kasi Ananthan and the electorates of Amparai and Seruvila being Sinhala Electorates. I have already mentioned that I accept the position concerning the 11,221 votes of Mr. Kasi Ananthan. This does not substantially alter my argument. As for Amparai and Seruvila, even if we exclude these two electorates and add the votes of Mr. Kasi Ananthan to the TULF we would have as Mr. Sri Kantha notes, 103,384 votes for the TULF and 96,789 for the UNP: 54,823 for the SLFP and 5,663 for the LSSP. These three parties are definitely against Eelam and would mean a total of 157,284. This still leaves the case of Eelam in a clear minority in the Tamil speaking areas of the Eastern province.

Mr. S. Sri Kantha says I lack "insight and perspective" because I interpreted the Padiruppu results by taking together the votes of the UNP, SLFP and LSSP. But this is not wrong when discussing the question of Eelam because these three parties are clearly opposed to the setting up of two separate states. It is not the same thing as when he argues about Kalmunai, Kalkudah, Muthur and Batticaloa (2) by lumping together the votes of the TULF, SLFP and LSSP. These three are not of the same view regarding Eelam.

There are further questions concerning "Colonization" and educational questions referred to by both writers. I hope to discuss these eventually. if your columns are open for an analysis of these two questions. **I am not sure that everybody would agree with Mr. Sivanayagam's view that:-**

**"If anyone thinks the Tamils had a bigger dole under the British Masters, well, there was something to be said for it. The dole was at least in accordance with merit, performance and diligence hardwork, and not according to parentage, and political pull."**

**Prior to the 1960s the Christians also claimed the same virtues rather unmindful of the distinct advantages they had in the educational structure and the severe handicaps of some of the others.** I agree with Mr. Sivanayagam that minority races and religions have a problem in adjusting themselves to a life in an independent Sri Lanka. I would not however regard this as "living on the dole" as he says. Those who are



worst off are the oppressed poor of all races and religions in the villages, plantations and slums. When we make common cause in their liberation, we will find that we have all a role and a share in trying to build a democratic and socialistic society in our country. While we must work to make the Sinhala majority aware of the rights and good will of the minorities, specially of the oppressed Tamils, we must also try to understand the problems and grievances of the majority of the population. They are also ruled by the same politicians, dominated by the same class structure and the same bureaucracy and police even though differently. My articles on the Election results about Eelam may help the Sinhala majority to know that not all persons in the East and even the North are for a vivisection of this country. This I believe is a help to the cause of national harmony, even if some may find some of the data somewhat uncomfortable to accept.

My conclusions were: there is clear and strong support for the TULF in the Jaffna Peninsula, a bit less in the Mainland of the Northern province but yet well over half, but no solid support in the Eastern Province, and a negligible support in the Puttalam electorate. Hence the Electorate has not given an overall mandate to the TULF for demanding a separate State for the area claimed in their Manifesto. In this sense they have over-shot the mark and the people are indicating to them a more conciliatory approach.

So far the discussion in your columns and in the *Sunday Times*, has not disproved these conclusions but has refined them with additional data.

Where my analysis is wrong I accept correction. May I also ask that where it is correct we give some recognition to the peoples verdict which I have tried to analyse. The "Statistics" of votes may also bear some sentiments and values which we should endeavour to empathize with and appreciate. ●

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*1/11/77*

Mr.Subramaniam Sivanayagam who had a varied journalistic career spanning 45 years, is Editor of the U.K.published journal - the HOT SPRING. He functioned as Assistant Editor (Publications), Ceylon Tourist Board at the time the TRIBUNE article was written. He later became Editor/Assistant Director at the Tourist Board.

Mr.Sivanayagam was Founder-Editor of the Jaffna-based SATURDAY REVIEW from January 1982 until July 1983 - when the paper was banned by the Sri Lanka government. Fleeing to India, he was Editor/Director of the Tamil Information Centre in Madras, with its head office in London. Subsequently, he assumed Editorship of the fortnightly TAMIL NATION launched in Madras in September 1990 and published by the TAMIL FORUM LTD. London In July 1991, following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, he was subjected to arbitrary arrest by the Indian government and jailed for more than a year, first under the National Security Act, and later under the Foreigners' Act.

