

## Long-term Camp Life and Changing Identities of Sri Lankan Women Refugees in India\*

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The study of identities of the marginal groups like the refugees has not received the kind of attention that it deserves. Right from the time of displacement to the phase of rehabilitation/incorporation refugees are forced to reject their old identities and accept the new ones. During the time of exile their identities remain in a flux. A refugee camp could be an ideal site for the study of changing identities, especially when the camp life becomes a long-drawn one. <sup>1</sup> This paper examines the trajectories of identity formation in refugee camps in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu where some 65,000 refugees have been living for more than a decade in about 111 refugee camps. This paper examines how the memories of displacement, martyrdom, and the state policies played a major role in shaping new identities of the refugee women. The past, the memories of war, the life of an ideal Tamil woman in Sri Lanka's North and the Northeast all contribute to the formation of new identities. Besides, the segregated camp life, restrictions on movements, lack of job opportunities, the exclusionary policies of the state too need to be explored in the study of women's identity in camps.

At the outset let me point out that instead of using the broader markers of identity like ethnicity, gender, occupation, language, caste and so on I am considering the new markers that gained prominence among the women during camp life. In a camp setting, women who carry on their day to day life with courage and dignity are referred to as 'the ideal women', women who sacrificed their near and dear ones in the war are called 'the mothers and sisters from the family of the martyrs', and women who try their luck elsewhere and migrate to the Middle East for jobs are known as 'the deserters', and those surrendered their chastity as 'fallen women' so on. These are some of the new identities of the Tamil women living in refugee camps. With the help of case studies, I would like to show how some of these identities are constructed over time and what these constructions would mean to the women in camps.

Many sociological studies have shown that the state plays an important role in constructing identities. E. Valentine Daniel, for example, describes the role of the state in the following way:

"...faced with the threat of Tamil separatist movement, the state....does like to highlight the differences among Tamils. In this mode, it differentiates Tamils of the Jaffna Peninsula from those who live along the east coast, from those who live along the northwest coast, from those who work on the tea estates in the Island's south-central hills, and so on. On the other hand, the state, at various time to various degrees, fuels the more

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general Sinhala sentiment that holds all Tamils (including the Tamils of South India) to constitute the monolithic other against whom the Sinhala people, along with the Sinhala state, can define its identity. The blueprint of this construction is to be found in linguistic nationalism" (1997:17).<sup>2</sup>

This is how the Sri Lankan state sharpened the existing divide between the Tamils of the Jaffna Peninsula, the estate Tamils, and the Muslim Tamils. As opposed to this when almost all the Tamil militant groups emphasized the participation of women in the national liberation struggle, the new identity of women as warriors gained currency. The Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) call to women to take part in the war clearly led to the shift in the construction of women from 'brave mother' to that of 'women warrior' or 'woman guerilla'. The Sri Lankan Tamils in India were seen as inheritors and part and parcel of a great Tamil culture and tradition, who became 'victims' of a bloody ethnic war, and now 'living in exile'. From time to time, Tamils in India were reminded by the politicians and the intellectuals of the great ethnic bond between the Tamils in the Island and the Indian Tamils. However, the state went out to prove that this earlier construction was more 'fictive' than 'real' since the Sri Lankan displaced Tamils were involved in killings of political leaders including the former Prime Ministers of India, Tamils from the Island were branded as 'subversive elements', 'potential terrorists'.

### **I. Background**

Nearly 64,000 Sri Lankan refugees are now residing in 111 camps in Tamil Nadu. These camps are located in 23 out of 29 districts in the state (Table 1.1 and Map 1). Some are large camps accommodating more than 1000 families. In the following six districts the number of families in camps exceeded 1000: Tiruvalur, Vellore, Tiruvannambalai, Erode, Madurai, and Shivaganga. Each of these districts accommodated 3,500 or more persons. After 1983 exodus of the Sri Lankan refugees, the then chief minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran drew up a plan to send refugees to as many districts as possible so that they are not confined in a few places. Accordingly, the district collectors were informed to allot land for their rehabilitation. This kind of dispersal gave them more space and job opportunities especially to those who managed to get shelter near the district headquarters or a small town. However, one of the drawbacks of the plan was meeting relatives and friends living in far off places. Many camps were located far away from the city or in unhygienic and congested cyclone shelters.

**Table 1**  
**CAMP POPULATION OF SRILANKAN REFUGEES**  
**IN TAMIL NADU, 2002**

S.No.	District	No. of Camps	No. of Families	Total No. of Persons
1.	Kancheepuram	1	88	98
2.	Tiruvallur	2	1031	4148
3.	Vellore	8	1109	4210
4.	Tiruvannamalai	13	1095	4158
5.	Tuticurin	4	397	1534
6.	Villupuram	2	372	1482
7.	Dharmapuri	10	988	3810
8.	Salem	8	813	3181
9.	Namakkal	2	424	1540
10.	Coimbatore	9	990	3788
11.	Erode	4	1254	4835
12.	Trichy	2	804	3017
13.	Karur	2	552	2128
14.	Perambalur	1	70	287
15.	Pudukottai	3	840	2997
16.	Dindigul	7	831	3160
17.	Madurai	4	1382	5177
18.	Sivaganga	7	1035	3339
19.	Virunagar	6	902	3341
20.	Ramanathapuram	1	523	1578
21.	Tirunelveli	8	753	2778
22.	Triptnukudi	3	373	1553
23.	Kanniyakumari	4	330	4308
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		111	16955	63941

Source: Report of the Government of Tamil Nadu, 2002.

Large-scale exodus of Tamil refugees took place on three occasions. The first influx began in 1983 and continued till 1987. During this time about 1,40,000 refugees arrived in Tamil Nadu to escape ethnic violence in Sri Lanka.<sup>4</sup> Out of these refugees, 43,000 were repatriated between 1987 and 1989, after the signing of a peace accord between India and Sri Lanka.<sup>5</sup> The second exodus took place in 1989 when the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) withdrew from Sri Lankan war-torn areas, most of these refugees were repatriated in 1991-92, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The third and the final influx began in April 1995 and it coincided with the declaration of Eelam War III, the battle between the Sri Lankan army and the Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The influx can be divided into three phases (Table 1.2). The story

of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees rotates around three large-scale displacements, rehabilitation, and repatriations on two occasions.

**Table1.2**  
**Influx of Tamil Refugees**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>No. of Refugees</b>
<b>First</b>	<b>1983-1989</b>	<b>1,34,053</b>
<b>Second</b>	<b>1989-1991</b>	<b>1,22,078</b>
<b>Third</b>	<b>1996-2001</b>	<b>21,940</b>

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2002, p.127.

## **II. Three Categories**

Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu can be divided into three broad categories. First, 'the camp refugees' or those who took shelter in camps, mostly located in the rural areas. They were sent from the Mandapam transit camp to different locations. The 'non-camp refugees' are those who are living in rented house with relatives and friends without any assistance from the government. Nearly fifty thousand refugees lived outside camps, most of them are staying in big cities<sup>6</sup>. The third group consisted of those who supposedly posed security threats since they were involved in subversive activities in Sri Lanka. They were sent to 'special camps' where they had to live under constant surveillance. These special camps came into existence in 1991. This paper deals with the first category of refugees only.

Following Kunz (1981) Sri Lankan Tamil refugees can also be classified in terms of degree of alienation<sup>7</sup>. There are refugees who believe that their opposition and antagonism to events at home uprooted them. They are paying the price for the principle they cherished. These refugees retain a strong bond with their homeland and they will be the first to come forward in the case of repatriation once the cause of their exile is removed. They are the heroes among the displaced. There are refugees who leaving their homeland for a long time feel alienated from the people back home. Long periods of asylum had caused such alienation. They are less likely to have a strong desire to return if they see no change in social and political conditions that alienated them. There are also 'self-alienated' refugees who exiled themselves rather than society alienating them. They are less likely to return. The degree of alienation from the community or from one's self is particularly relevant for the study of camp refugees. We shall return to this point later.

### **III. Identities: old and new**

Let me begin by stating that identities take forms, erode, reconfigure over time and this is all the more so in the case of refugees. Marker of identities that are not important any more may lose relevance. The village in South Asia remained a reference point of identity for centuries<sup>8</sup>. The village, following Daniel, may be described as a 'place'. One is linked to a place by a sense of identity with and belonging to that has roots. This may be contrasted with 'space', which is an "epistemic unit", it provides with a way of seeing the world. The space has a deeper and larger connotation, more stable than place<sup>9</sup>. The sense of belonging to a village gradually disappears among the people experiencing liminality, and it becomes a fluid marker of identity. When thousands of villagers are displaced from the place that they shared for many generations, they look out for other appropriate markers of identity. Sometimes, one's district becomes an important marker that remains with them throughout their journey as displaced and during their stay in refugee camps.

Another marker of identity, namely 'caste' too loses its meaning with the displacement.<sup>10</sup> Circumstances make it difficult for displaced persons to hang on to this traditional marker of identity. In congested boats that bring them to India and camps, following of caste rules and practices becomes extremely difficult. Thus in marriages or in other forms of social interactions caste ceases to carry any weight. In some extreme cases, linguistic and community identities undergo changes too. This happens when lives in exile turn out to be a long one. The displaced people get assimilated with the local social milieu, speak in the language of the hosts and adopt culture of the local communities. Many examples of this kind of assimilation can be cited from recent South Asian history. For example, Afghans migrated to many parts of northern India several years ago, today old markers of their identity can hardly be found among the Afghans. Several Chinese and Burmese had migrated to India since the early fifties. For them too the traditional markers of identity carry little meaning. However, recent studies on diasporas have shown that there remains a space between the rejection of the old markers and the acceptance of the new. This space gives uniqueness to the community. The core elements of identities that stay on and give uniqueness to diasporas is now a popular subject for sociological research.<sup>11</sup>

### **IV. The 'Ideal Women' in Camps**

As mentioned earlier, the construction of identities of refugee women has been studied here in the context of harsh camp life, which to a large extent is a result of the exclusionary policies of the state. The new identities of women that are associated with hard life in refugee camps are labeled by the camp refugees as 'the ideal women', 'the deserters', 'the women from the home of the martyrs', and so on. Let me examine the case of the ideal women first. These are the women exemplifying an ideal and often taken as a model for imitation by the rest as they are role models

for many in an extraordinary situation. The ideal that they exemplify is simply keeping high morale in the midst of adversaries. The loss of husbands and elderly male members in the war forced these women to act as the heads of their households. Some of them do all the household chores, look after the children and also go out to earn extra money. Some of these women are married but most of the time lives alone because their husbands go to far off places in search of work and show up only at the time of distribution of doles. Here are some case histories of women, widows who are considered as 'ideal'.

Let me now cite some examples.<sup>12</sup> Laxmi lives with five children in a camp located in the southern Tamil Nadu. I entered Laxmi's house to find her in the kitchen what is a luxurious 4 feet by 4 feet space, an extension of the small room in which they live. Her three daughters, all looking alike, and one in the cradle were all there. Laxmi told me that her only son was out playing. Although Laxmi lives with her husband, she is literally a single mother since her husband goes out to work and comes back only after a week or a fortnight. He needs to be here at the time of disbursements of loans. He earns Rs.60.00 a day and brings it all home, with five mouths to feed. She often borrows money from the moneylender at Rs.10 interest for 15 days for a principal of Rs.100. With debts and hardships life hardly moves for Laxmi. Her neighbour says, "she looks after the children as best as she could.....the children come first when it comes to the question of feeding the hungry." Although she comes from a well off family in Sri Lanka, Laxmi has dealt with the hard life in camps in an exemplary manner.

Like Laxmi, another ideal woman is Jaya. In 1992, Jaya and her family had to leave their home at Mud road, in Mannar District, after her husband was killed in crossfire. A month later, helped by her neighbours she reached Manar. Time was difficult for her as uncertainty clouded her mind for not having a single pie at hand and having to protect three children. She shielded them through the forests: She recollects with gratitude the favour she received from her neighbours who helped her with the bus fare, food and also provided necessary protection: They even paid the boat fee for the family. She spent nearly ten years in camp and weathered crisis after crisis with determination. Rajalakshimi, the eldest daughter, was married when she was 16. She was once again diagnosed with a cyst and was recommended an operation. A camp refugee points out, "she refused to get operated fearing the expenses since she has two other children to look after." She is unable to lift heavy loads now, walk or even perform the daily chores. The illness has deprived her of daily wage job. However, her son works very hard to educate the two kids and feed her. In the eyes of the camp resident, Jaya showed courage, brought up children with her sweat and blood, an out and out an ideal mother.

Nageshwari is another ideal woman in the camp. She and her family lived in Omandhai in Vavunia district. For war and continuous bombing they decided to flee. They walked a distance of 45 kilometers for five days to reach Madu and for twenty-five days to go to Gramam. On

reaching Rameshwaram, the family of six had to look after an ailing child aged 2. The officials saw the child and paid immediate attention and sent the family along with the child to Palayamkottai hospital where he died. She suffers from chronic asthma and is unable to perform her home duties. Her eldest daughter has epileptic attacks, the third daughter developed tuberculosis and the husband was wounded by thorn which grew septic, he was unable to move his fingers or grip anything with his hand. He goes to work only when he is well. The family had a debt of Rs.48, 000. After meticulous effort she managed to reduce the debt to Rs.18, 000. Despite frequent illness Nageshwari wants to go out and work to save the sinking family.

These are the women of courage, struggling hard to make both ends meet against all odds. A camp resident says, "...against all odds she stood like a rock, did all that was necessary to look after other members of the family..." Another person remarks, "she personifies high moral and ethical standard for other women in the camp." Indeed, these are exceptional women carrying out struggle with dignity. For camp residents, they know how to strike a balance between adversaries and moral life. Laxmi lives alone, carrying all the burden on her shoulder, Jaya suffers from ill health, and Nageswari too is unwell and sinking in debts. Valorization of ideal living does not take note of the suffering in silence. The ideal womanhood finds expression in a culture of silence, poverty, and hardships. They make an ideal ground for this culture to thrive on.<sup>13</sup>

#### **V. Women of the Martyr's Family**

The war in Sri Lanka restructured social relations, redefined the role of women in a war-ravaged society. Many women sacrificed their husbands, sons, daughters, and relatives for the cause of 'Tamil Eelam'. These women occupy special position among the Tamils in refugee camps, they are treated with honour and dignity. These are 'the women from the family of martyrs'

In the mid-eighties, almost all the Tamil political outfits carried out campaign to recruit as many women as possible into their organizations. They were not only needed in the battle fields but also to nurse wounded soldiers, to carry out campaign for the cause. The political pamphlets valorized Tamil women and their sacrifice.<sup>15</sup> The appearance of a Tamil women in the print media wearing military outfits and with a gun in the hand presented a new image of women. Women who sacrificed their lives as suicide bombers became martyrs, the role model for other young women. Peteel noted how terms like 'thuuwar' (revolutionaries), 'fedayeen (guerillas), 'munadaleen' (strugglers) became signifiers of a reconfigured self and community in the case of Palestinian women.<sup>14</sup> One can see parallels here.

A few cases may be cited. Mary Jesantha lived with her husband in Akaturchi. northern Sri Lanka. The IPKF men were around these areas and they harassed the men living close to the IPKF camps.<sup>15</sup> One day, the IPKF caught Mary's husband and charged him for supporting the

LTTE. They beat him up and kept him in detention for a few days. Ever since he was beaten up, he developed chest pain and finally expired. At that time Mary was pregnant. Her in-laws took her and cared for her and the baby. Eventually she was asked to leave. Today she works in an iron factory to bring up her children. But she is from a martyr's family. The camp refugees know that her husband died for a cause.

Manjula is from Vavunia district. Due to army occupancy and heavy shelling they were forced to leave the place. Manjula's husband was taken by the army for his links with the LTTE and was beaten up severely. When he came back he fell sick and was not in a position to work. They traveled from Vavunia on foot for three days and nights without food amidst heavy shelling and aerial bombing. They rested in temples and churches, on the way. In April 1990 they reached India. They were transferred from Mandapam transit camp to Thapathi. On reaching India her husband fell ill, he died shortly after arrival. The children were educated in the neighbouring school. Manjula is sick with a series of intestinal problems. She says that the doctor instructed her not to work. Burden of poverty forces her to work hard every day. Back home she cooks and takes care of her children. She looks grimly at the future and says that "I am worried." Manjula occupies a special place among the camp women. Camp refugees know that Manjula's husband sacrificed his life, thus she is a member of the martyr's family.

All such women of martyr's family enjoy prestige, honour and dignity within the camp. A woman whose husband had been killed in action, who lost sons, daughters or relatives for Eelam is always regarded as a 'woman who has made sacrifice for a noble cause'. This is not unique only in camps, even in Sri Lanka, in the areas under the control of the LTTE, such women are treated with honour and deference. A family that sent a male or female member to the battle field is regarded as 'a freedom fighter's family' and the family that sacrificed a member in the war is 'a martyr's family'.<sup>16</sup>

The 'ideal women' and 'women from the martyr's family' are to set high moral and ethical standards against all odds. As stated, these high expectations are difficult to fulfill in refugee camps. These women are expected to handle crisis at any cost for the sake of ideal ethical and moral life since they are the cut above the rest. As one refugee puts it "...come what may, these are women with brave hearts, they are not going to tilt..." This often puts an added burden on the shoulder of these women as they work hard to meet expectations from their new roles. Most of them pay the price, physically and mentally and they suffer in silence

## **VI. The Deserters**

Economic hardship has forced many refugee women to take up jobs in the Middle East in a clandestine manner, often by obtaining false passport and by forging one's name. Since the journey is undertaken secretly, it is difficult to get an exact figure of women who had been to the Middle East and now living in the camp and those who have not returned yet. These women



who leave camp to take up jobs elsewhere are called '*kaividugiravau*' or the deserters. Several steps need to be taken before a prospective refugee woman leaves India. First, she needs to establish contact with the local agent who acts as a conduit between the main agent in Colombo and his client in Tamil Nadu. These agents are refugees who are in the age group between 25 and 40. Second, financial matters have to be settled, and once the deal is struck the agent takes step to obtain 'clearance' or exit permit with the help of the local 'Q' branch official, and the Revenue Inspector. Third, once the clearance is obtained, the agent applies for an emergency passport to take his client to Colombo. He purchases the air ticket and establishes contact with the main agent for necessary action there. Once this is over, the woman begins her journey from Chennai to Colombo and from there to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia or to Kuwait or to other countries in the Middle East. At the place of arrival a contact person takes the woman to her employer or the employer himself turns up at the airport to pick up the maid himself.<sup>17</sup>

In financial terms, these jobs are lucrative since each maid earns minimum Rs.4000 a month. But for money they have to forego several things like their religious identity, since the employers take only Muslim women as housemaids. The women take fictitious names, surrender their rights to live in the camps as refugees, forego doles and any other assistance from the state. Anandakrishna, an agent residing in one of the refugee camps, provided the details in the following way:

A prospective immigrant to Saudi Arabia will have to obtain an emergency passport from the Sri Lankan High Commission at a price of Rs. 310. For an emergency passport, one has to pay an additional amount of Rs. 1000 to the broker. Most women prefer an early delivery of their passports and thus end up paying Rs.1310 in all. One of the major expenses is the amount payable to the Sri Lankan agency at Colombo that arranges the deal. His commission is Rs.4,500 initially. The air ticket from Chennai to Colombo and from Colombo to Riyadh would cost Rs.13,500, in addition one has to pay a visa fee of Rs.100 in Colombo.

In Riyadh, each maid receives a monthly salary of Rs.6000 per month, from which the agent in Colombo deducts Rs.2000 each month. The job pays off only in the long run."

Anandakrishna finds out suitable women from camps. For each deal his commission is only Rs.2000. However, as a middleman Anandakrishna becomes a party to fraud and deception since Hindu women migrating to Saudi Arabia take fictitious names in their passports. A few cases may be cited here.

In 1996, Asai and her husband traveled from Mannar by cycle to Madu and then by boat to Rameswaram transit camp. After spending a few months in a camp, she decided to work in Saudi Arabia for two years as a domestic maid. For this, she had taken a loan from a family friend who collaborated with an agency in Sri Lanka to set up the job and issue a passport. For this placement, the Saudi family that took Asai paid 400 riyals to the Sri Lankan Agency. In addition, it was agreed that 200 riyals from Asai's salary of 600 riyals would be deducted by the agency every month. She then returned to camp in 1998 on a six-month tourist visa after the termination

of her two-year contract. In the same year she again went to Jeddah for three years and finally returned to Sri Lanka and then to India in September 2001 on a six-month tourist visa. Though her visa has expired, she continues to live in the camp illegally without registration. She pointed out, "earlier in 1998, a few women who had returned along with me were in jail for four days for staying in camp exceeding visa time limit. But I have spoken to the 'Q' branch officials about my status and they guaranteed that I won't have any problems in future". She remarked, "though I have spent almost five years abroad, my husband was not wise enough to save any money.

One of the camp refugees remarked, "why doesn't she stay back like other women? How can she leave husband and children behind for such a long time?"

In 1997, Jayalakshmi went to Riyadh for a maid's job for two years, in order to earn money and educate her children. Upon her return in 1999, the collector of Vellore sent a letter to Jayalakshmi stating that she was not entitled to stay in India and she has to go back because her visa was not valid anymore. She did not take that letter seriously and one day police came to her house and arrested her and similar other women who went to Saudi for work. They were taken to police station and were asked to stay there for seven days.

Jayalakshmi with the help of a lawyer came out of the police station. The lawyer charged her in all Rs.1000 for her release. When she was working in Saudi, she was earning Rs.4000 and what all she earned for her children's education, was spent in renewing her stay in the camp, paying bribe and paying fees to the lawyer.

The journey to the Middle East has led to more hardship and complications. One immediate consequence of taking up jobs abroad is that a refugee loses his right to live in India and right to receive dole. When they return with the tourist visa, they are allowed to live in the country as long as the visa is valid, normally for a period of six months. Once the visa expires, they encounter trouble from the authorities. They end up paying large sums of money as bribe for staying in the camp. The hard earned money goes for the payment of bribe. Jayalakshmi points out, ".....once you are back you feel like a stranger.....the camp members do not come forward to help you....and the sharks are all around.."

Finally, in camps some are considered as 'fallen women', those who have surrendered their chastity. The women belonging to this category are those who had to take prostitution for living. Some of these women have their clients within the camp, some go out to cities for better prospect. These are the women who differ from a community's dominant ideologies, and they are condemned for moral weakness. Even in most liminal situation, control over sexuality by women is considered as non-negotiable.

Liminal position of refugee women in camps provides an ideal opportunity for the study of identities. New identities take shape and become important markers in everyday life. The identity formation is always in flux, changing constantly depending on the changing social situation. It is also a process of negotiation, always eliminating or accepting, and in some cases compromising.

In the case of Tamil women refugees the old markers that got eliminated were caste, village, kinship, region and so on and the markers that got acceptance were ideal womanhood, martyrdom, desertion, sexual immorality and the like. In a perceptive essay on the Moors in Sri Lanka Q. Ismail noted "identities cannot be taken for granted; that they are fluid, transient, always in flux, never permanent; and that they alter (discursively) precisely because they are constructs. If they were "real", stable and eternal, they couldn't change."<sup>17</sup> This indeed is the case with the Tamil women, the new markers of identity now play a significant role among the women in the refugee camps. These markers are byproduct of the exclusionary policies of the state, and of the war and martyrdom. However, the stories of configuration and reconfiguration of identities of refugee women would tell us very little unless we take note of the issues of silencing the women and the suffering in silence, the former is linked with the latter in a complex way.

### References:

1. A few detailed accounts of ethnic strife in Sri Lanka are now available. See, for instance, Blair, A (1986). *A Study of the Situations of Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu*, Copenhagen: Danish Refugee Council. Bose, Sumantra (1994). *State Nations, Sovereignty: Sri Lanka, India and the Tamil Eelam Movement*. New Delhi: Sage. Daniel, Valentine (1997) *Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence: Sri Lanka, Sinhala and Tamils*, Delhi: Oxford University Press. De Silva, C.R. 1982. 'Sri Lankan Tamils Rift in Sri Lanka' in A.J. Wilson and D. Dalton (eds.) *The States of South Asia*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications. Mohan, Ram (1989). *Sri Lanka: the Fractured Island*, New Delhi: Penguin Books .Manoharan, Chelvadurai (1987). *Ethnic Conflicts and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii. Manoharan, K. (1987). *Tamil Refugees from Sri Lanka (Ceylon)*, New Delhi: People's Union for Civil Liberties. Manor, James (1984). *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, London Croom Helm. Somasundaram, Daya (1998). *Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils*, New Delhi: Sage. Tambiah, Stanley (1986). *Sri Lanka: the Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. U.S. Committee for Refugees (1991) *Sri Lanka: Island of Refugees*, Issue Paper: Washington D.C. - (1994) *The Bitter Harvest*, Issue paper, Washington.
2. E. Valentine Daniel (1995), *Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence: Sri Lankans, Sinhala and Tamils*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.
3. 'Q' Branch is a special branch of the police in the Tamil Nadu state that was initially assigned the function to curb the activities of the communists. Later on they were asked to look after the refugee-related matters.
4. The influx of refugees coincided with the Eelam Wars. Eelam War I began after the spread of 1983 riots against the Tamils. The Eelam war II started in 1990. In April 1995, the LTTE broke off talks with the Sri Lankan government and declared the Eelam War III.
5. Two Reports that dealt with the repatriation issues are prepared by the U.S. Committee for Refugees (1991) *Sri Lanka: Island of Refugees*, Issue Paper: Washington D.C. & (1994) *The Bitter Harvest*, Issue paper, Washington.
6. According to a Rehabilitation Department official, this may be an underestimation. The figure includes only those who have registered their names with the local police stations, there may be more staying without registration.
7. E.F. Kunz, 'Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory', *International Migration Review*, vol. 15, 1981, pp.42-51.
8. Anthropologists referred to the significant role of village solidarity time and again. See M.N. Srinivas, *The Social System of Mysore Village*, in M. Mariott (ed.) (1955), *Village India*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.32; F.G. Bailey (1959), *Politics and Social Change: Orissa in 1959*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p.129.
9. E. Valentine Daniel, op. cite. p.17.
10. Very little is known about the caste system among the Tamils in Sri Lanka. M. Banks examined castes among the Jaffna Tamils and N. Yalman dealt with castes among Kandyan community in their papers published in E. Leach(ed) (1960), *Aspects of Castes in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. For a recent account see K. Sivathambi, 'Community Identity and Militarization in Sri Lanka:

- Tamil Militants', in Wijeveraja and Hussain (eds.) (1989). *The Challenge in South Asia: Democracy, Development and Regional Cooperation*, New Delhi, Sage Publications.
11. For theoretical issues on the diaspora, see P. Carter (1996), *The Lie of the Land*, London: Faber & Faber.
  12. These women were interviewed as a part of a project work for the UNHCR, New Delhi. All the names appear here are pseudonyms.
  13. The behaviour is characterized by docility since they do not openly speak out. Their obedience is too demonstrative so that suspicions and criticisms do not arise. In literary theory the phenomenon of silencing is well known. Cheryl A. Wall (ed.) (1989), *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory and Writing by Black Women*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 10-15.
  14. Julie M Peteel, 'Transforming Trust : Dispossession and Empowerment among Palestinian Refugees' in E. Valentine Daniel and John char. Kundsens (eds.)(1995). *Mistrusting Refugees*, Berkeley, University of California Press, p. 178.
  15. The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed in 1987 after the signing of a Pact between India and Sri Lanka. The LTTE was against the deployment of the Indian troops. The IPKF was involved in a bitter clash with the LTTE.
  16. Radhika Coomarswamy (1997). "Women of the LTTE", *Frontline*, 10 January, 1997 shows some aspect of the identity of Tamil women as militants.
  17. For a detailed account of migration of Sri Lankan women to the Middle East, see M.R. Gamburd (2000), *Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Households*, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.
  18. Q. Ismail, 'Unmooring Identity: the Antinomies of Elite Muslim Self-representation in Modern Sri Lanka' in Pradeep Jeganathan and Quadri Ismail (eds.) (1995), *Unmaking the Nation: the Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*, p. 59.