

Fourth International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies January 1974 Jaffna - Tamil Eelam

Inaugural Presidential Address by Professor S.Vithiananthan, President, International Association of Tamil Research, Eelam National Unit

I take great pleasure and pride in welcoming on behalf of the Eelam National Unit of the International Association of Tamil Research (IATR) the research scholars assembled here and the general public.

Jaffna has had a continuous tradition of literature from the poet Poothanthevanar to Pandithamani Kanapathipillai. It has also been a centre of learning where councils have met under the auspices of kings to further the cause of Tamil.

Once again we welcome you all into our midst. Even at the conclusion of the conference when you depart with the words ' Good bye ' we do not reply ' Good bye ' Instead we say 'Will you be coming again '.

Next to South India, Jaffna retains the right and fitness to hold a conference of Tamil research. Yogi Suddhananda Bharathiar from South India says

"Jaffna is the land of brave Tamils. It has intellect and it has valour. From time immemorial it has withstood the onslaught of foreigners. The Tamils are second to none They stand at the forefront in all fields "

Saalai Ilanthirayan who wrote to us regarding the conference has this to say

"It is my belief that more than the Tamils of South India it is the Tamils of Eelam who possess great concern about the welfare of the Tamils. The political and social conditions in Eelam might have contributed towards this but one cannot under-estimate their fervour"

It is only right that we who have elicited the admiration of South India with our love for Tamil should have the conference in Jaffna. It is our right too. All those who love Tamil with sincerity and are conscious of the heritage of Eelam Tamils and their contribution to Tamil literature will welcome this.

The contribution of Eelam Tamils towards the development of Tamil is substantial. Eelam scholars have been pioneers in various fields of literary activities.

Old manuscripts on the verge of extinction were rescued by Sri Lankans. Arumuga Navalar from Eelam edited a number of old texts and contributed substantially through his lucid prose works It is a Eelam Tamil who first revealed the cultural splendour of the Tamils and brought to light the greatness of Tamil literature and paved the way for research on the history of Tamils. The author of the first encyclopaedia in Tamil was from Jaffna . A Tamil from Eelam published the first Tamil dictionary based on Western models. The history of Tamil music was made known by Swami Vipulananda from Sri Lanka. He was also the first Professor of Tamil. A number of books on science were written here. Eelam pioneered the teaching of science in Tamil as well. A Eelam Professor brought the spoken idiom into literary use through his dramas. Thus in diverse ways Eelam has been a source of strength to Tamils.

In short, both in the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century Sri Lankans were in the forefront of literary development in Tamil. During the last 25 years too Eelam Tamils have excelled in poetry, the short story and the novel. The University of Sri Lanka has done considerable research in Tamil literature, grammar, linguistics, history of Tamils, archaeology, economics and geography. The research efforts undertaken by scholars of the University of Sri Lanka have been praised by Western Scholars for their intellectual calibre

Further, next to South India it is in Eelam that the Tamil language lives with dynamism. Tamils live in South India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, Mauritius, Indonesia, Vietnam, Fiji, South Africa, Rhodesia, Guadeloupe, Reunion and Trinidad. But in many of these lands, they do not live as Tamils. Although they may comprehend Tamil they cannot express themselves in this language. Some are Tamils only in terms of ethnic identity. In this context Tamil could be said to be alive only in South India and Sri Lanka. It is the medium of instruction for Tamils in Universities. Seen against this backdrop it is most fitting that the conference be held in Sri Lanka.

It is necessary at the present juncture to reflect on the birth and development of the I. A. T. R. This association reaches its 10th birthday in another four days. In January 1964 the conference of International Oriental Scholars took place in New Delhi and on the seventh day of the same month the I.A.T.R was formed. Scholars from 15 countries met to establish this association Prof. K. Kanapathipillai represented Eelam and Fr X. S. Thaninayagam represented Malaysia. Pandit K.P. Katnam too was present. Thereafter conferences took place in Malaysia, India and France. On Monday next week the 7th January this association will celebrate its 10th birthday in Jafna.

What has this Association achieved during the past ten years ? First it has dispensed with the theory that only native speakers of Tamil can do research on Tamil literature or language. Research in Tamilology has broken through narrow confines and broadened in various ways. Instead of confining research merely to Tamil literature and grammar, projects have been undertaken in Tamilian History, Tamil Culture, Archaeology and Sociology. New facts have been unearthed about the greatness of Tamil literature, the antiquity and development of Tamil culture and linguistics. The I.A. T. R. has provided a common platform for scholars dedicated to research in various countries to give expression to their findings. This is no mean achievement.

Not only did interchange of ideas take place but they also enabled observers to take a keen interest in Tamil research. After every conference greater numbers have shown interest in Tamil research. This would become evident when we compare the names of scholars who participated in the past three conferences and those who wished to take part in the 4th conference. New scholars joined hands with old delegates. Thus not only did these conferences foster research in Tamil, they also enlarged the number of research scholars in Tamih

Further the I.A. T. R. has been instrumental in making Tamil part of the curriculum in foreign Universities and in making foreign Professors take a keen interest in Tamil research. There was a time when Western Universities did research on Sanskrit and Indo-Aryan languages. Now the situation has changed and the study of Tamil language Tamil literature, Tamilian history and culture has become a popular one. Earlier westerners studied Tamil for purposes of religious propaganda, commerce and political domination. Now they study for the purpose of research and to discover the intrinsic greatness of Tamil.

We reconize their love and respect for Tamil in their act of giving to themselves and their children Tamil names - scholars in Russia have been enamoured to the extent of calling themselves 'Sembian'. and ' Iyngurran'. A Czechoslovakian research scholar has christened his daughter 'Kannamma'. It fills us with shame to think that instead of Tamil names some of us give our children the names of film stars. The scholars mentioned above want the words ' student of Tainil ' as their epitaph. These scholars not only love Tamil but if they were to be bom again they would love to be born as Tamils. We bow our heads in shame when we refect on how some of our folk tried to prevent them from attending the conference.

As we recapitulate the role played by this association in fostering Tamil research and love for Tamil among foreigners one cannot help praising one of its founders Fr. Thaninayagam. He is the Ambassador of the Tamil language. Although he has rejected material pleasures, his love for Tamil remains. Wherever he went he gave speeches, wrote articles, spoke over the air and stressed to natives of those lands the greatness and antiquity of the Tamil language. Ho edited the quarterly "Tamil Culture" as a means of spreading the greatness of Tamil. Above and beyond this he brought together the Tamil scholars of Europe, Africa, and Asia on to a common platform through the I. A. T. R.

Thus the I. A. T. R. is his brain child. For the last ten years it grew under his loving care and now he celebrates its 10th birthday in the midst of many foreign scholars. The hazards of bringing up a child are not unknown to you. This child was destined to face an acid test at the end of its 10th year. People accused Fr. Thaninayagam of having deserted the child at this crucial moment. He is a custodian of Tamil culture that knows not the betrayal of children. That is why he struggled with us to save this child. By consenting to inaugurate the 4th conference he has proved that his ideals lie in the growth of this child. We are deeply indebted to him.

We thank the delegates of foreign countries such as India, Malaysia, England, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, America, Canada, Hungary and Australia for having come in the midst of so many impediments and proved that this conference is not a parochial affair but an International Conference of Tamil Research.

This conference does not aim at promoting communalism. It is a national conference and we welcome with all humility both Sinhalese and Muslim scholars who are present, as delegates and observers. To those who have come from Batticaloa, Trincomalee, the hill country, Vavuniya, Mannar and Mullaitivu, and to those who have stood by us in the task of keeping to the schedule we are deeply grateful.

This is the first occasion on which a conference like this is being held in Sri Lanka. It gained international recognition even before it began. That the recognition will rise tenfold after the conference is evident. Therefore we seek your co-operation to ensure that this conference which has elicited the attention of the entire world be held smoothly

God bore me well To serve the cause of Tamil

3 January 1974

Matrimonial Alliances between Tamilnad and the Sinhalese Royal Family in the 18th Century and the Establishment of a Madurai Dynasty in Kandy

Fourth International Tamil Conference Seminar January 1974, Jaffna, Tamil Eelam

Royal marriages have been instruments of state policy rather than affairs of the heart. It was due to a series of such diplomatic marriage alliances that in the eighteenth century, a youth from Madurai peacefully ascended the throne of Kandy and was unanimously hailed by the chiefs and people as the ruler of Ceylon.

The practice of securing brides from Tamil Nad to the Sinhalese royal family was not a phenomenon peculiar to the eighteenth century. It goes back to the hazy days of the origin of the Sinhalese race when its legendary founder Vijaya, refused to be consecrated unless he had a queen of equal rank. Vijaya's ministers sent envoys, " with many precious gifts, jewels and pearls and so forth, to the city of Madurai in Southern (India) to woo the daughter of the Pandu king for their lord " (1)

The mission was a complete success for the princess arrived and Vijaya was duly consecrated together with his South Indian mahesi.(2) Another one hundred maidens followed the princess, and they were married to the ministers of Vijaya.(3)

The Madurai and Tinnevelley districts of South India were separated from the Island only by the Gulf of Mannar and as a result there had been frequent contacts over the centuries amicable as well as hostile between this area and Ceylon.

Candamukha Siva who ruled in Anuradhapura from 103—112 A. D. had a consort named Damiladevi or the Tamil queen.(4) The Sinhalese royal family considered it a privilege to intermarry with the Madurai dynasty for Vijayabahu I (1055—1110) "fetched the Pandu king who came of an unblemished line and wedded to him royal sister Mitta by name." (5)

The daughter of Parakramabahu VI, (1412—1467) who ruled from Kotte was married to the Tamil Scholar, Nannurtunaya, a minister of the king.(6)

Thus we have several recorded instances of both brides and grooms from South India considered very eligible as spouses for Sinhalese princes and princesses These inter marriages, however frequent were contracted if and when it was considered politically expedient to do so, but in the time of the Kandyan kings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it became a matter of policy for the chief queen or queens to be obtained from Madurai.

The kingdom of Kandy situated in the central highlands of Ceylon came into prominence at the beginning of the seventeenth century when it emerged as the only indigenous kingdom in the island. Kandy thenceforth began to play a new role in the history of Ceylon for its ruler, now the sole surviving Sinhalese king, had to bear the brunt of the struggle with the Portuguese and then the Dutch, who had by this time become masters of the maritime provinces of the island. From this time onwards, amidst the troubled politics we hear of a series of matrimonial alliances between the Sinhalese royal family at Kandy and the Nayaks of Madurai. These connections culminated in the ascendance of a youth from Madurai on the Kandyan throne and the establishment of the so-called Nayakka dynasty in Kandy.

The reasons which may have prompted the Kandyan kings after the seventeenth century to contract these marriage alliances with South India, can reasonably be inferred.

One good reason why such marriages should have been sought may be found in the need to curb the growing power of the Kandyan nobles who had by this time become a threat to the security of the throne. Royal intermarriages with the nobility would mean a further growth in the power of the nobles who even at this time were a factor to reckon with. By introducing these South Indian elements to the court, the kings were possibly trying to check the influence of the insubordinate Sinhala nobles.

With regard to the marriage of Narendrasimha (1707—1739), the last king of the Sinhalese dynasty, the contemporary Sinhalese poem Mandarapura Puvata hints that the king sought the hand of a princess from Madurai in order to quell the power of his rebellious chiefs who were coveting the throne, and also to produce a pure royal line unmixed with the nobility. Therefore he ignored the royal maidens of Ceylon who were of "mixed descent" and invited the daughter of the king of Madurai.(7)

Marriages with the ruling family of Madurai would also solve the dynastic problem created by the disappearance of all the other Sinhalese kingdoms, that of finding brides of appropriate social status.

From the time of Vimala Dharma Suriya I (1592—1604) onwards, the royal family at Kandy was the only one of that rank in the island. The kings desired a consort of the Suriyavamsa or solar lineage to grace the occasion of their consecration and also to produce an heir acceptable to the people. Since all the other royal houses in Ceylon including the one at Jaffna were extinct, the king of Kandy turned in search of a spouse to Madurai which was close geographically and closer still in historic associations to Ceylon.

Already there existed definite communication between the kings of Kandy and the Nayak rulers. Vimala Dharma Suriya I obtained military help from the Tanjore-Madurai area against a common foe, the Portuguese.(8)

The next king Senarat (1604—1635) and also Sankili King of Jaffna (1616—1619) had received reinforcements of troops from the Nayaks of South India.(9) Perhaps the military assistance paved the way for matrimonial alliances, for soon after this, Senarat's successor, Rajahsinha II (1635—1687) had espoused

a princess from Madurai. This was perhaps a part of the price which the Kandyan kings had to pay when they obtained military aid.

According to the Culavamsa, (10) Rajasinha II revived the practice of securing brides from Madurai. Robert Knox the Englishman who spent a long period of imprisonment in the Kandyan Kingdom in the time of Rajasinha II, substantiates the Culavamsa when he says that the king's "right and lawful queen" was a Malabar.(11). The king had a secondary wife, a Kandyan lady of noble birth to whom he gave lands and wealth. But queenly rank and status were reserved from this reign onwards for the Madurai ladies. Rajasimha's queen bore him a son who ascended the throne as Vimala Dharma Suriya II (1687—1707).

Vimala Dharma Suriya followed his father's example and took as his chief queen a Madurai princesses. (12) On his death in 1707 his seventeen year old son ascended the throne as Sri Vira Parakrama Narendrasimha (1707—1739). It is little known that Narendrasimha had a Kandyan wife, a noble lady of exquisite beauty, the daughter of Monaravila Disava (13) of Matale, a great favourite of the king's father. (14) However, immediately after his accession he began his negotiations with the royal house of Madurai in search of a consort. His mother and grandmother were both of South Indian origin and he too turned in that direction in spite of all the qualifications of the Moneravilas as parents-inlaw. Obviously the South Indian alliance had become a matter of policy.

The Dutch who were masters of the maritime districts of Ceylon, held the principal ports and controlled the seas round the island. Therefore tacit Dutch approval was necessary for any communication between Kandy and South India. Besides the king of Kandy had no ships and the Dutch were instrumental in conveying the brides and their retinue from South India.

According to Sinhalese and Dutch sources the brides who were brought across to Ceylon were of royal birth. But an interesting Tamil document, perhaps the only available South Indian source which refers to these marriage alliances contradicts this view, regarding the ancestry of Narendrasinha's queen.

According to this Tamil document entitled, Narrative of the Affairs of Kandidesam,(15) found among the Mirtanjaya Manuscripts, the Nayak of Madura at the time Vijayaranga Cokkanatha (1688-1732), was enraged at the audacity of the king of Kandy who had dared to ask a female from the royal house of Madurai. He ordered the Kandyan envoys out of the city and strictly instructed his kinsmen not to give any female to them.

Then a destitute Hindu subject of the Nayak accepted the gifts from the Kandyan envoys and to give them his daughter. The envoys were asked to proceed to the island of Ramesvaram and the poor man and his family met them there under cover of night. Here both parties embarked on a dhoney (16) and when they arrived in Kandy the consecration of Narendrasinha with the so-called " princess" from Madurai was celebrated with great magnificence in 1708.(17)

It is left for us to decide how much credit we should give to this story. Unfortunately we do not know anything about the author of this document in order to establish the aim he had in view; whether he was merely narrating events or trying to bring discredit upon the kings of Kandy.

Nor could we unreservedly accept the evidence of the Sinhalese sources which attribute royal birth to the South Indian brides.

The father of Narendrasinha's bride who is called Pitti Nayakkar, in a Dutch source,(18) obviously had little connection with the ruling Nayak - even if his family had any wealth or influence earlier, it had lost them all. by the time he agreed to give his daughter to the king of Kandy; for he came over to Kandy with his wife, son and wife's brother and continued to resided (19) there. Evidently, Kandy was a far more congenial home than their own for thither they flocked with their kith and kin- we are therefore inclined to accept the Tamil document when it says that Pitti Nayakkar was a destitute subject of the Nayak of Madurai; but it is not unlikely that the family had seen better days.

The question of the parentage of Narendrasinha's South Indian queen is a very pertinent one, for the king had no children by her and as a result it was her brother who ascended the throne of Kandy in 1739 as Sri Vijaya Rajasinha and founded the Nayakkar dynasty in Ceylon.

Why was this Madurai youth chosen as heir to the throne of Kandy following a mode of succession that had never been known in Ceylon ?

The king had no children by his mahesi, but he had a son by a secondary wife of the vellala caste. (20) The bar to his succession was the lack of royal status in the mother. According to the law of succession that prevailed in Ceylon the throne passed almost always from father to son, born of a mahesi or from brother to brother. When Narendrasinha selected the brother of his chief queen, the son of Pitti Nayakkar, as his successor to the throne of Kandy, his act was without precedent in Ceylon's history.

Perhaps the choice of the queen's brother was influenced by the marumakkathayam law which prevailed among the Nayaks who had settled in Malabar and who were known as Nayars or Nairs.

The most outstanding feature in the Malabar Nair society was the tarvad (21) wherein the mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grandchildren by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants of the sister's side, however distant their relationship, lived together.

Fathers were practically ignored in the law and descent was traced entirely through the mothers. The eldest male was the head of this whole group. The law by which succession was regulated in these tarvads was called marumakkathayam which means succession by nephews.

The name may be misleading for it was not restricted to nephews alone for a brother or any other kinsman on the female side, if he happened to be the eldest male member at the time could succeed' the headship of the tarvad.(22)

The influence of these mother right institutions were markedly felt even in the Tamil areas of Tinnevely, Madurai, Ramnad and Tanjore.(23) Kandy had associations with all these areas. It is therefore tempting to conclude that it was the marumakkathayam law which influenced the accession of the son of Pitti Nayakkar to the throne of Kandy as Sri Vijaya Rajasinha.

When the new ruler came to face the problem of finding a suitable consort, the same causes which had led his immediate predecessors to look for a ruling family in South India for a bride, obviously still operated.

Moreover events in Madurai had by now made it more probable that an alliance with the Kandyan ruler would be seen as acceptable or even desirable.

In 1732 the long reign of Vijayaranga Cokkanatha over the Madurai Kingdom came to an end. When rival claimants were struggling for the throne the Muslim armies overran Madurai and caused the virtual extinction of the Nayak dynasty.(24)

The surviving members of the family dispersed in various directions and one of them Bangafu Tirumala Nayaka who had once been a claimant to the throne sought refuge in the fort at Vellai kurichchi.(25)

It was at this time, when the Madurai kingdom was reduced to complete anarchy, that Sri Vijaya Rajasinha ascended the throne of Kandy and sought a wife from among his own relatives in South India. For this purpose he sent messengers to Madurai in 1739. Since the Nayaks had now lost the power and prestige they enjoyed in the days of Vijayaranga Cokkanatha, the members of the family thought it advisable and even desirable to accept the offer from the king of Kandy.

The details of the negotiations could be followed in the Tamil document, "Narrative of the Affairs of Kandidesam", which may be corroborated from Dutch sources. Two brothers Rama Krishnappa Nayaka and Narenappa Nayaka, who were kinsmen of Bangaru Tirumala Nayaka made their way to Ramand to meet the Kandyan envoys. Narenappa had a daughter of marriageable age. The brothers now dispossessed and landless, agreed to the Kandyan request and with their families, they accompanied the envoys to Ceylon. There was little to hope for in South India, and once Narenappa Nayaka came over to Ceylon for his daughter's nuptial, he showed no wish to return but settled instead in Kandy with his kith and kin.(26) He was destined to be not only the father-in-law of one king, but the father of the next two kings of Kandy; for his two sons, the one five or six years old in 1740, and the other still an infant were successively to succeed Sri Vijaya Rajasinha.

The process of linking Kandy with Madurai did not stop here for seven years later in 1747, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha married another Madurai princess.

The king, however, died childless soon after, having nominated as his successor, his eldest brother-in-law who had been living in the court ever since his sister had married the king. Thus by this peculiar mode of succession the son of Narenappa Nayaka who claimed kingship with the ruling Madurai Nayak family now ascended the throne of Kandy as Kirti Sri Rajasinha. (1747—1781).

It is known from reliable sources that the king married four princesses from Madurai; two of them were descendants of Vijaya Raghava (1633—73), Nayak of Tanjore and the other two were the king's own relatives.

Each bride was accompanied by a host of relatives who made Kandy their permanent home. The strength of the South Indian connection was well displayed at the death of Kirti Sri Rajasinha. He had no children by any of his Madurai queens, but he had two sons and six daughters by his favourite secondary wife, Mampitiye Kumarihamy, daughter of the Disava of Bintanna and grand-daughter of the blind and aged Mampitiye Disava who wielded considerable influence in the court.(27) She was never raised to the rank of mahesi or queen. Neither the rank and power of the Mampitiyes nor the king's passionate attachment to his Kandyan wife was of any consequence in the selection of a successor to the throne.

For the claims of Mampitiye Kumarihamy's sons were overlooked and the choice fell on the king's brother who was living in the court. As a result when Kirti Sri Rajasinha died in 1781 the second son of Narenappa Sayaka ascended the throne as Rajadi Rajasinha (1782—98). He too married several princesses from Madurai but died childless. The fourth and last of this dynasty was Sri Vikrama Rajasinha (1798—1815), a Madurai youth who was living in the palace and whose parentage is still open to doubt It was in his time that the British who had occupied the maritime provinces, annexed Kandy and banished the king and all his male relatives back to Vellore.

It is seen from the foregoing account that whereas the earlier Tamil invaders who, on several occasions had occupied parts of the island, did so by force of arms, in the case of the Nayaks the throne passed peacefully and almost imperceptibly into their hands. Whereas in the tenth century the Colas maintained their power in Ceylon by military might in the eighteenth century the Nayak rulers maintained their position by adopting a different policy. They identified themselves with their subjects, openly professed and patronised Buddhism and proclaimed themselves not as the pioneers of a new era but as the upholders of the existing order.

Paradoxically, the close and continued contact that was maintained with the mainland, and the influx of royal relatives due to the chaotic conditions that prevailed in Madurai, resulted in the culture of Tamil Nad pervading every aspect of Kandyan court life.

Court ceremonial was elaborated on patterns prevailing in South India. Contact with Tamil culture resulted in interesting developments in Sinhalese dance and music.(28) There is evidence that dancing girls were brought from Madurai for the functions in the Kandyan court.(29) The cultural impact of Madurai is seen in the art and architecture of the eighteenth century as well. Over and above all this the influence of Hinduism

which had always been strong became dominant not only in court circles but at every level of society, so much so that popular Buddhism became saturated with Hindu beliefs and practices. It could be said that the process of Tamilisation of the Sinhalese court which was accelerated by the Cola occupation reached a climax in the eighteenth century when a Nayak dynasty held sway.

FOOTNOTES

- 1. The Mahavamsa, or Great Chronicle of Ceylon, translated into English by Wilhelm Geiger, London, 1934. Chap. VII, verses 49—50.
- 2. The Kings of Ceylon were polygamous and only a lady of royal blood could become mahesi or queen with an important role to play in the abhiseka or consecration. A king could have more than one mahesi and the first of them would normally would be entitled aggamahesi or chief queen. He could have any number of secondary wives of lower rank but their offspring were not considered as legal claimants to the throne.
- 3. .Mahavamsa, VII, 53.
- 4. Ibid., XXXV. 48.
- 5. The Culavamsa. translated by Wilhelm and from the German into English by Mrs. C. Mabel Rickmers, (Parts I and II), Colombo 1953. Chap. 59. verses 40-41.
- 6. Salalihini Sandesaya, (ed.) N. D. de S. Wijesekera, Colombo 194, Verse 96.
- 7. Madarapura Puvata, (ed.) Labugama Lankananda, Ceylon 1958. verses 433—36.
- 8. Fernae de Queyroz. Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, translated by S. G. Perera, Colombo. 1930. pp. 535—536.
- 9. C. R. de Silva. The Portuguese in Ceylon 1618—1638, Colombo, 1971. page 42.
- 10. Culavamsa, 97. 40.
- 11. Robert Knox. An Historical Relation of Ceylon, Glasgow, 1911. page 54.
- 12. Culavamsa, 97.2
- 13. A provincial governor of the King of Kandy.
- 14. Kalingubodhi Jatakaya, a contemporary Sinhalese poem found in the Hugh Nevill collection of Ballads in the British Museum No. 857.
- 15. Edited and translated by Rev. William Taylor in, Oriental Historical Manuscripts in the Tamil Language, Vol . II, Appendix G. pages 42—49. The same information is found in a document in the India Office Library, London among the Collin Mackenzie Collection (general) Vol.4, page 107. This is entitled, "Kegardling the kings of Candia and their connections with Madura." and is an English translation of an original Tamil document.
- 16. A small boat used in the shallow waters between India and Ceylon.
- 17. A. C. Lawrie, A Gazetteer of the Central Provinces of Ceylon. (2 vols.) Colombo 1896 and 1898. Vol. I, page 41. The king gave a generous grant of land to the ministers who went to Madura and fetched the " princess ".
- 18. Memoir of Joan Schreuder for his successor, 1762. Translated by E. Reimers, Colombo 1946. page 30.
- 19. Ibid.
- 20. Ibid.
- 21. K. M. Kapadia, Marriage and family in India Bombay, 1966. pages 336—339.
- 22. T. K. Gopal Panikkar. Malabar and its folk Madras, 1900. pages 14.
- 23. Heinz Becherl. " Mother Right and Succession to the Throne in Malabar and Ceylon." in The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies. Vol. VI. Jan.—June 1963, No. or, page 26.
- 24. R. S. Aiyar, The History of the Nayaks of Madura, Madras, 1924. pages 232—234.
- 25. William Taylor, Oriental Historical Manuscripts in the Tamil Language; Vow. II, pages 41—43.
- 26. Memoirs of Joan Schreuder, page 30.
- 27. Ibid.
- 28. E. R. Sarachchandra, The Folk Drama of Ceylon, Ceylon 1966. pages 12—13

- 29. Minutes of the Dutch Political Council, 11 February 1747, Ceylon National Archives/Dutch Records, Vol. 90

International Tamil Conference (1974) Remembered

(10 January 1974)

It is twenty-seven years today since the 4th International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies took place in Jaffna, on 10 Jan 1974.

The whole of Jaffna peninsula was in a festival mood throughout the period during the conference. All roads and lanes were decorated with Banana plants, coconut trees, Casuarina branches etc. Pandals were erected on the roads, and the traditional Thoranams were hung along the roads for miles and miles. People behaved as if a wedding was taking place in their own homes. I would call it a period of Tamil awakening.

The seminar was conducted mainly in the Veerasingam Hall and Tamil scholars from all over the world were presenting papers at the conference that lasted almost ten days. On the last day a public meeting was arranged by the organisers to enable the public to listen to the speeches by the scholars.

A massive stage was erected in front of the Veerasingam Hall and over fifty thousand people congregated on the Jaffna Esplanade. It was a great experience to listen to the speeches by the scholars, as their utterances were very informative. For example we felt proud to hear that Tamil is one the three oldest languages of the world we live in. Every Tamil who listened to the lectures felt utterly proud to be born a Tamil.

While Professor Naina Mohamed from India was delivering his lecture tragedy struck.

Several vans and jeeps filled with armed policemen drove in and started shooting at random and hitting people with their batons and riffle butts. People began to run aimlessly. There was a stampede.

I saw the policemen chasing innocent people, and trampling over those fallen on the ground. I put my youngest son on the ground and tried to safeguard him by crouching over him. At that time one policeman hit me on my left elbow that hurt me for months thereafter.

I have five children out of them two of our sons went missing in the crowd. There were some youngsters trying to lower down girls and ladies into a ditch surrounding the Jaffna Fort to safeguard them from police attack. And another set of our boys, were helping these girls and ladies to climb out of the ditch near the Muniyappar Temple. I told my wife and my two daughters that I would pick them near the Temple and crawled along with my youngest son to my car.

I put my son in first and crept into the car - an old Ford Anglia - and started driving on the esplanade towards the temple. I felt sorry that I had to drive over abandoned bicycles. My eldest son (12) who was hiding under a truck saw my car and ran behind it and caught up at the temple. It was a big relief to see him alive. But we were terrified to hear that our other son, who was only 10, had gone missing. We loaded the car with four more girls known to us, and drove home after dropping the girls at their respective residences. When we arrived home we were overjoyed to see our second son had already found his way home.

While at the esplanade I saw the police shoot at the electric wires that fell on the crowd and nine innocent lives were lost on that night. This included a good friend of mine Mr. J.F. Sigmaringham (St. John's

College), a great teacher, social worker and an outstanding co-operator. Earlier on the same day two more civilians died of electrocution during a procession on the Hospital Road. These two deaths were attributed to the non co-operation on the part of the then mayor of Jaffna, who was a stooge of the government - a Quisling.

All together eleven lives were sacrificed on that day.

I would consider that day the 10th of January 1974 was the day when the Tamil Eelam struggle became the struggle of the Tamil people. Even though the name 'Tigers' was not known at that time, I saw a few youngsters standing up to the policemen, and fighting them by throwing aerated water bottles and stones. I can still visualise those bottles crashing the windscreens of the police jeeps. It was touching and encouraging to note elderly men collecting empty bottles and stones and handing them over to the youngsters who were attacking the police. I take it that it was the birth of the Ellai Padai and Uthavuppadai of today.

A struggle that started with empty bottles has grown to the extent of using 152mm calibre artilleries, T56 rifles, Basukas, RPG launchers, Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers (MBRL) etc., etc.

The few hand full of youngsters of the 10th of January 1974 are now transformed into a conventional army facing the might of the 125,000 strong Sinhala army.

Let us resolve that we extend our support unreservedly to establish peace, safety, security and dignity to our people back in Tamil Eelam.

I request all readers of this article to devote a few minutes in silence today to pay our respects to the eleven Tamils, who sacrificed their life on the 10th of January 1974 for our cause.

They are among our MAVEEERAR. May their souls rest in peace.

K. Mylvaganam

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