

institutional sources of credit need to be streamlined so as to give relief to the vulnerable sectors among peasant producers. Crop insurance as well as the expansion of marketing facilities are necessary to protect the producer when a crop fails and to ensure a fair income when the crop succeeds. The decline in the state network that purchased paddy from the producer at the farm gate is a major reason why the private trader is able to dictate terms to the farmer. So long as the producer is not effectively linked with the market, the farmer is constantly at the mercy of the middleman and the trader. Re-vitalization of paddy purchasing networks without bureaucratic corruption, and ensuring fair farm gate prices should be built into any future policy reform. Re-introduction of agricultural extension

services, while relaxing the existing bureaucratic grip over the peasantry, is yet another reform measure urgently needed.

The question of input subsidies looms large over the entire crisis which has recently developed in the peasant economy. Although it may go against the grain of the free-market orthodoxy, there is no substitute for carefully planned protectionism in peasant agriculture. A serious policy debate needs to be initiated to review afresh the question of peasant subsidies.

Longer term policy reforms should emanate from a careful examination of all dimensions of the crisis, within the broader framework of macro-economic reform strategies.

## COMMUNITY, NATION AND MILITARISM : TAMIL NATIONALISM IN SRI LANKA

Radhika Coomaraswamy

**T**he discourse of third world nationalism has always been linked to anti-colonial debates. But increasingly today there is a new form of nationalism. This nationalism is the product of the post-colonial state. In some literature this is called sub-nationalism implying that the original nationalism which was anti-colonial is primary while this discourse is secondary. One of the arguments of this paper is that this "sub-nationalism" can be understood using the modular forms which are used for the discussion of anti-colonial nationalism and that many of the issues fall into the realm of contemporary debates on nationalism and nationalist theory.

It is in the realm of community that we begin our story. In his response to Benedict Anderson book, Partha Chatterjee writes:-

Here lies the root of our post colonial misery. It is not our inability to think our few forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the nation-state. The result is that the history of community and that of the state have remained out of joint and often in open antagonism, testimony to the simultaneous and often antagonistic existence in most countries of Asia and Africa...of a state which dominates without going hegemonic and several hegemonic projects still in search of dominance.

The post-colonial state then poses a different framework than the colonial one for the playing out of nationalism. The nationalism that it cultivates becomes hegemonic but only partially so. Rooted in a religious, linguistic and dynastic history, the imagination of the state is only partially the imagination of the community. This partiality is also its vulnerability. This disjuncture between the imagination of the state and the imagination of the community is a good starting point for the understanding of Tamil nationalism.

Since independence and especially after 1956, Sri Lanka nationalism has been equated with Sinhala nationalism. The identity was

rooted in a sense of a community of people who were Aryan of race, spoke Sinhala, practised the Buddhist religion and were chosen to live in the island called Sri Lanka. The Tamil community resisted the imposition of this identity from its inception and since 1956 have been in the throes of political development which by 1976 had led to the declaration of a separate state by the mainstream political party which was operating out of the North and the East where a significant percentage of the Tamil people lived. Bryan Pffanberger calls this a "defensive, nationalism" which others have called "reactive". The argument is that the development of nationalist sentiments did not begin at the colonial period. It was specifically linked to grievances accumulated by the actions of the post-colonial state. If the post-colonial state had acted in a different way and heightened a different sense of community, then Tamil nationalism may not have emerged. The emergence of Tamil nationalism is directly due to the imagination or lack of imagination of the post-colonial state which interacted dialectically with the aspirations of the Tamil community and its political leaders. In this sense sub-nationalism differs from the anti-colonial terms would brook no compromise with the colonial state.

Independence meant a permanent political rupture. But in the specific context of Tamil sub-nationalism, there was a choice of identities and nationalism was one of the options.

This choice is another difference between anti-colonial nationalism and subnationalism in the Sri Lankan context, While the former worked inevitably towards total separation, the post-colonial reality imagines other possibilities; that of devolution, federalism, and confederation. These possibilities of revolution are in fact different to the anti-colonial nationalism which worked towards total rupture. Total rupture is still a possibility but so are the other options. This choice then makes the struggle and the discourse qualitatively different at least when it comes to the terms of political negotiation.



Despite these differences, the structure of nationalist ideology with regard to Tamil nationalism remains similar to those outlined by Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities*. This modular structure appears to have certain common features even with subnationalism and this commonality should be stressed. This is not to say that there are no important differences which makes nationalist movements a fascinating subject of study.

Let us begin with the structures of commonality. Tamil nationalism like many of its counterparts has its justification in a particular construction of history and dynasty. While the Sinhalese have a major chronicle, the *Mahavamsa*, which gives them their nationalist imagination, Tamil nationalist past has been constructed over the last two centuries.

Dagmar Hellman Rajanayagam writes that the Tamils of Sri Lanka had a choice of past history which was at their disposal for the construction of identity. This choice of past was present in the nineteenth century but that the Tamils exhausted their options over time leaving them with only one, the option of a nationalist history centred around the Jaffna peninsula.

What were the choices presented to the Tamil community and why did history lead to the selection of only one of these options? According to Rajanayagam, in the nineteenth century, Tamil leaders had a pan-South Asian view of their identity. Figures like Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy embodied this choice—the notion of a South Asian culture and vision which would stand up to the west. The belief that the identity could draw from any part of South Asia was very clear in their discourses which dealt with Hindu and Buddhist texts both from India and Sri Lanka and in the clothes they wore which drew from all parts of the sub-continent.

This identity soon gave way under religious revivalism in the peninsula to a South Indian identity and a commonality with Tamil Nadu. The religious revival under Arumugha Nawalar was a example of this type of identity. Nawalar and his Saiva Siddanta doctrine struck a resonance in Tamil Nadu and this religious bond in fighting the missionaries carried forward a choice of identity with Tamil Nadu, an identity that still raises fears among the Sinhalese living in Sri Lanka .

Rajanayagam then goes onto say that from 1878 onward Tamil attention was drawn away from an Indian and located in Sri Lanka. A Dutch governor Klaas Isaacs asked a jaffna Tamil named Maylvakana Pulavar to write down the history of Jaffna sometime in the eighteenth century. He wrote down the Vaipava Malai, "The Garland of Jaffna" out of oral traditions and palm leaf manuscripts. This manuscript was translated by Britto in 1879. According to Rajanayagam this translation and many of the translations coming out of that period rooted Sri Lankan Tamil identity in Sri Lanka. The Yalpana Vaipava Malai spoke of an independent Tamil kingdom in the North of the Island. This notion that the Tamils had a unique civilisation in Sri Lanka has been the animating principle behind the Tamil historical consciousness in the past century. The historian C. Rasanyagam in his book *Ancient Jaffna*, a controversial study in his time, went even further. Only does he locate Tamil history in the

island but in the whole of the island seeing the Dravidian presence even in the Sinhala South. For this reason there was a sense that all of Sri Lanka belonged to Tamils as it did to the Sinhalese. This pan-Sri Lanka Tamil identity paralleled the developments in the political field where Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and Arunachalam joined the nationalist struggle against the British.

Since independence, and with Sinhala Buddhist identity asserting its hegemony in the south of the island, there is historiography which attempts to carve out the north and the east as the traditional homeland of the Tamils. This paralleled developments where the Tamil were asking for federalism in the North and the East and later a separate state. As Dagmar Rajanayagam writes, "the historical view continually narrows from the sub-continent then to Sri Lanka with Jaffna and then to Sri Lanka versus Jaffna"

The argument is then that the Tamil had a choice of identities but with the particular dynamics with the Sinhalese nationalist movement and the post-colonial state, the choice was narrowed to one—a Jaffna centric identity with its claim to an independent kingdom in the North and the East which existed before the arrival of the Western powers. This dynastic history as Gellner would point out is an important structural feature of the ideology of Tamil nationalism. But despite its present-day acceptance, Dagmar Rajanayagam's argument clearly shows that it was constructed over time. There were many elements and perceptions of Tamil history and it is only the imperative of a separate state, a call of the last two decades, which has brought us to a version of dynastic history focused on the Jaffna Kingdom in the North of the island.

What does it mean that the Tamil had a choice of history and dynasty? This question allows for subjective manoeuvrability which would be objected to by historical determinists. It could be argued that all histories have choices and what is hegemonic at a particular time is not so at another and that nationalist history is a construction. And yet the fact that Tamils have exercised their choice in two centuries makes the process more transparent and gives those in the school of thought which believes that there are no essences only constructs in nationalism, a good case-study for their argument.

The other bases of Tamil identity, though also constructed, appear to have a deeper logic of the Gellner variety, but they are not limited to an identity with Sri Lankan territory. The extra-territoriality of these elements of Tamil identity which have major significance for Tamil nationalism is also very significant since Tamil identity cannot be limited only by territory. This extraterritoriality is a strength but also a weakness in the claims made by Tamil nationalists for a homeland in Sri Lanka . While dynasty produces the bond with Tamil Nadu, this contradiction then is at the centre of the dilemma of the constructed Tamil nation. The Tamil community is in one sense imagining a homeland in Sri Lanka but its full imagination also has a regional impetus.

Religious revival in the Tamil areas was spearheaded by Arumugha Navalar (1822-1879). Navalar began his career by translating the Bible into Tamil. He was so successful that he was taken to India by Perceival to defend his translation against others written in Tamil



Nadu. But Navalar was to use this experience to turn totally against Christianity and to begin a process to revive Saivite Hindu worship in south India and Jaffna under the banner of Saiva Siddanta.

In combating the missionary influx into the peninsula he drew on the classic Andersonian variables, print capitalism and primary education. These were his main instruments in propagating the Saiva siddanta revival in Jaffna and South India. He founded a school in Vannaiponnai in 1848 and acquired a printing press.

He conducted street sermons and founded a Saiva siddanta catechism. His influence was as extensive in Tamil Nadu as it was in Jaffna. His identity was religious and therefore carried with it this extraterritoriality. For this reason many scholars do not see him mainly as a religious reviver, a protector of the Saivite faith.

And yet, there is a tendency to compare him with Anagarika Dharmapala, who led the Buddhist revival in the South. Anagarika accepted the territorial speciality of Sri Lanka as an island in itself but he too had extraterritorial links. His attempts to forge a Buddhist revival and his concern over Buddha Gaya and its resurrection is testament to the extra-territoriality when it came to Buddhist initiatives. Again we are reminded of Anderson and his religious empire, only in the sense that the religious revivalists though they provided an anchor for a particular type of identity were not nationalists in the strict sense since their interests were not always curtailed by territory.

Arumuga Navalar revived the Hindu religion much in the same vein as Dharmapala, in that he attempted to purify the religion so that it would be Christianity's equal. Therefore the reform constructed a new Saivite Community where the practices were borrowed or inspired by protestant Christian activity. Like Dharmapala there was little social reform content. Navalar married Christian forms of worship with orthodox rituals fixed Hinduism. He purified the temples by getting rid of certain rituals including dance recitals. He described in details how a *poosai* should be conducted and he sought to introduce Brahminical elements by Bhakti traditions and folk rituals.

He claimed for example that the premier temple in Jaffna, the Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil was not built according to ritual prescription and that the Brahmins in charge of the temple were not proper in rituals. He started a campaign to rebuild the temple and to introduce what he considered were proper rituals. He got rid of street plays and dance items which used to be common place in all the temples. He also was concerned that only Siva, Parvati, Murukan and Ganesh should be worshipped as they were the pantheon of Saivite rituals. He was against any trace of Vishnu or Pattini coming into the worship.

Navalar is then a reformer who embodies all the fears of the Sinhalese community. Firstly, he had a close connection to Tamil Nadu and spent many years there. He travelled back and forth and though he spoke often of Tamil Nadu he rarely mentioned the south of Sri Lanka. Secondly his zealous revival of Saiva Siddanta and his claim that Jaffna was the home of this Saivite revival challenged

Buddhist expectations that this was an island wholly blessed by the Vaishnavite pantheon to secondary status, he removed the commonality of the popular traditions which bound Sinhalese and Tamil at the level of popular religion. The shrines to Pattini in the South East and North was one common feature of popular religion. In addition, though he mimicked Christian practices such as alms to the poor, there was very little social reform content in his work.

Navalar, then, can easily be constructed as the Sinhala Buddhist "other". At a time when Sinhala nationalism and Tamil nationalism are in a state of mutual antagonism, it is not unusual that Navalar's name has emerged as the father of Tamil nationalism. But this claim may be incorrect. Despite all the variables which make him suit the theory of nationalism and those who argue for Protestants Buddhism, Navalar may not be the father of the Tamil nationalism. He had very little political interest and never articulated a political vision. It is even doubtful whether he objected to British rule and governance, only to the activities of the missionaries. Most social scientists agree that Tamil nationalism is rooted more in the linguistic tradition of Tamil legacy and not in Saiva Siddanta.

And yet Navalar raises an important issue. There is a tendency in scholarship to link religious revivalism and nationalism as part of one process. Whether it is Dharmapala, Roy, Saraswati, or Navalar, there is a tradition of scholarship that links them to the nationalist movement as major figures in this activity. We should ask ourselves whether this link is accurate in all these cases. Where nationalism has a strong religious component then the link between religious revivalism and nationalism may be valid but this is not necessarily the case and to do so at an early stage is to lose the battle for secularism before the analysis has begun.

Though Navalar is known as a religious revivalist his special place as the father of modern Tamil prose may be more relevant to the Tamil nationalist tradition than his religious revivalism. He argued that Tamil was sacred because it was the language of Saiva Siddanta. Tamil he claimed should be honoured and adored and he published many grammars and primers. In addition he used Tamil prose to speak of Saivite virtues. This use of prose was another major contribution of Navalar.

Arasaratnam and many others who have written on Tamil nationalism see the Sri Lankan Tamil rebellion as a rebellion of a linguistic minority not a religious one. This aspect is seconded by the fact that many Christian missionaries became lovers of Tamil and were also involved in its revival. Caldwell, Perceival, G.U. Pope, Father X.S. Thaninayagam were among the Christians who took part in the revival of the Tamil language. The same type of secular linguistic revival took place in Tamil Nadu in the 1930's. Again there are Andersonian resonances with the formation of printing press and the growth of print capitalism around Tamil language in the years before independence.

It is also in the linguistic revival that social reform became a part of the discussion. Cheran in his paper refers to the writings of a school of Tamil authors engaged in social reform in the "Tamil speaking world of Goodness". These included Pavalar Thuraiappah



Pillai among others who sought to transform Jaffna society along with reviving the Tamil language.

The notion that Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka is linguistic and not religious has long been held by Sri Lankan writers on the subject. There is some truth in that assertion since there have been a secular quality to Tamil nationalism in India and Sri Lanka. But if language is the distinctive marker, again there is the problem of extra-territoriality. If language is the marker then Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Muslims in Sri Lanka as well as South Indian Tamils would become part of the "Tamil Speaking world of Goodness". The nation would be an expansive concept. The Federal Party and others tried to play on this theme when they called the North and East of Sri Lanka the "Tamil Speaking Region" and therefore part of a Tamil traditional homeland.

The extraterritoriality of language strengthens Tamil identity but what does it do to Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka. Firstly it creates a uniformity with the Muslims which the latter have recently rejected preferring instead to sharpen their religious identity over the linguistic identity centered around Tamil. This has led to major confrontations in the east of the island. But the linguistic identity has strengthened bonds with Tamil Nadu where there is common access to the world of culture and the arts. This bond then accentuates linguistic kinship but cuts against the notion of a separate state in the North and East of the country which is unique in and of itself.

There are those who argue that Jaffna has developed its own culture which is distinct from Tamil Nadu and therefore more in keeping with the demand for autonomy in the North and the East. Cheran in his survey of Sri Lankan Tamil literature makes such a case that Tamil nationalism is for the most part paralleled by cultural nationalism. Partha Chatterjee argues that it is in the realm of culture that the difference from western modular forms makes itself most evident. When it comes to "subnationalist" movements, culture also becomes a means of asserting difference and rebellion against the post-colonial state.

Like the chronology of historical choice, there is a chronology of culture among Sri Lankan Tamils which is now generally accepted. Cheran in his survey of Tamil culture points to the poetry of the 1930's as being the poetry of the Ceylonese nationalists when Tamils felt that the whole island belonged equally to the Tamils and the Sinhalese.

**"Ceylon a glorious pearl  
is our country  
If you get this feeling  
You do have a sweet home".**

Another poem :-

**"Eelam our land is a maiden Queen  
Being served by the Sinhala and  
Tamil\ The twin maids".**

This was the phase of a Sri Lankan Tamil identity which encompassed the whole island at the time the historical choice was to participate fully with the Sinhalese in the anti-colonial struggle. Politics, Culture and history were in resonance asserting unity with the Sinhalese but difference with the colonial powers. There were other trends but there seemed to be an interface between mainstream politics.

In addition to poetry there was a revival of the Bharata Natya dance form, Karnatic music singing, Nadheswaran festivals and temple building. This phase as the revival of Tamil culture in a reconstructed form to make it appeal in a civilisational sense to an equality with the West. It was an era of Sanskritisation of temples with purification campaigns *a la* Navalar and the performance of high culture. Folk music and folk rituals were ignored as not being worthy. Though influenced by Tamil Nadu it was a Sri Lankan revival of Tamil arts within the framework of a united and unitary state. The standard of measurement was the colonial culture and the colonial state.

The next phase of Tamil culture took place in 1956. The Sinhala Buddhist revival had an extraordinary effect on the Tamil cultural sense. On the one hand, Tamil resistance to the post-colonial state is dated from this period where Sinhala only was made the official language. But this Tamil resistance at the political level was countered by cultural occurrences which were very different. This was the period of the Tamil Progressive Writers Association which approved of Bandaranaike's socialist discourse though it was wary on the Sinhala Buddhist part of his identity politics. On balance, they supported the movement through class rhetoric ;

**"In Mathagal Kandasamy takes a crow bar  
In Matale, Podi Menike is going for stones to pelt  
And in Nathandiya Nazeem Lebbe opts for a knife".**

So while politics tore the communities apart, Tamil cultural revival led by such eminent scholars such as Prof Kailasapthy and Sivathamby searched for a socialist unity. The Progressive Writers Association was not a fringe group but a major trend in Tamil culture and literature.

When politics was charging difference and rebellion from the post-colonial state why was culture attempting to heal the wounds? This is a question that is rarely asked of this period. The only explanation is that the universal theories of Marxism had brought intellectuals together as allies of Bandaranaike and it was convenient at that point to ignore the cultural abyss that was soon to overtake the two communities. The era of socialist co-operation with the State in the South also included Tamil socialist collaboration even in the face of ethnically hostile acts such as the declaration of Sinhala as the official language. The autonomy of culture from political determinism is exemplified by this period of Tamil cultural history.

In time, however, Tamil ethnic rebellion took the upper hand. Poets such as Kasi Ananda and Kovai Mahesan began to speak of a Tamil culture of the North and the East with rising militancy. *Tamil engal aayuthum*-Tamil is our weapon was an anthology of poems written



in the 1960's. While universal Marxist culture provided a bond, ethnic politics and ethnic revival soon asserted the difference with the post-colonial state. As the state continued on its path of non-reconciliation, following up the Sinhala Only Act with colonisation and standardisation, Tamil political and cultural resistance began to resonate as one though they had been separated in the 1950's. Politics, history and culture began to run parallel. There were other countervailing movements in the peninsula including the violent storms with regard to caste discrimination but the mainstream political discourse and cultural discourse were in some agreement.

It is often argued that the Tamil sense of community which in the 1970's was asking for nationhood was a false unity. Authors such as Pfaffenberger have argued that Tamil demands for federalism and autonomy were demands initially made by the upper-caste vellalars to preserve the unity of the community in the face of rebellion by minority low-caste Tamils. His argument is that it is vellalar domination which is associated with strong opinions on regional autonomy. Many of his claims seem to be incorrect if one were to accept D.B.S. Jeyaraj's assessment of the social composition of the present movement where the intermediate caste has taken the lead and minority Tamils as well as Vellalars are expected to follow.

And yet Pfaffenberger's query raises an important issue. Now has such a caste-ridden community managed to forge ethnic unity in the face of internal division and hatreds. Why have the internal divisions given way to a constructed unity of ethnicity and nation. Minority Tamils were very badly treated in traditional Tamil society. A quote from Pfaffenberger will give the extent of this injustice:-

Minority Tamils were forbidden to enter laundries, barber shops, cafes, taxis, to keep women in seclusion, to wear shoes, to sit on bus seats, to register names for social benefits, to attend school, to cover the upper parts of the body, to wear gold earrings, if male to cut their hair, to use umbrellas, to own bicycles or cars, to cremate the dead or to convert to Christianity or Buddhism,

Given the nature of this oppression and the militancy of protest against caste discrimination in the 1960's, it is interesting to see why an ethnic identity of being Sri Lankan Tamil subsumed caste identities in the 1970's paving the way for the assertion of nationalism. Pfaffenberger argues that the traditional elite politicians of the Tamil political parties engaged in a strategy of defensive nationalism which succeeded in rallying the community solidly behind their leadership.

This ability to unite the community in the face of internal divisions would have been no easy task if not for the fact that the Sri Lankan post-colonial state began a series of actions which led to a sense of grievance on the part of the Tamil community. Discrimination in language, standardisation and colonisation became themes constantly reiterated by Tamil politicians. In addition in 1976, there was shooting in the peninsula which resulted in electrocution and deaths during the Tamil international research conference. Tamil

unity and Tamil ethnicity were constructed in opposition to the post-colonial state and emerged as powerful identities over and above caste and class rivalries.

While the debates between Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Partha Chatterjee help us understand the contours of constructed Tamil national identity, it is Frantz Fanon who provided us insights into the development of the past two decades of militant activism in the North and the East. Qadri Ismail in an article on "Rethinking the Post-Colonial Nation: the usefulness of Frantz Fanon" points to how Fanon's analysis helps us understand the actions of the Sri Lankan post-colonial state as well as the action of Tamil militants who have taken to violent resistance.

Ismail points out that Benedict Anderson's model may help us understand the nationalist movement during the colonial era but is not adequate in explaining actions of the post-colonial state especially as it relates to ethnic issues. Fanon was totally opposed to ethnic diversity. Post-colonialism was not an inherited state or nation had to be constructed and created even with the use of violence. The national idea and culture have to be forged and the people unified not just through intellectual activity but through armed struggle. The forging of a nation-state could brook no compromise with tribal and regional factionalism. He argues that violence is necessary for the creation of a unified nation and for social transformation within the post-colonial nation.

The actions of successive Sri Lankan regimes and their blind actions with regard to ethnic minorities can be understood in the context of Fanon. Fanon envisions a socialist regime which has captured power but which faces extreme obstacles to the enforcement of its will. This is precisely the mind-set of the Bandaranaike regime which adopted Sinhala Only in 1958 and the United Front government which introduced standardisation in the 1970's. These two are the watershed of Tamil resistance. But from the eyes of the State, it was Fanon's ideology which was at work. This need to construct an indigenous socialism which bypasses the bourgeois phase is a strong ideological current in Sri Lankan political discourse. Indigenous socialism has no room for absurdantist ethnicity or for federalism or devolution. It anticipates the capture of state power and the use of that state power to transform the society at hand.

It is the power of this post-colonial ideology which even allowed Tamil intellectuals of the Progressive Writers Association to support the Bandaranaike regime despite its enactment of Sinhala only.

Because the nation is conceived as heterogeneous, because all its inhabitants don't necessarily see themselves as of a single entity, the intellectual must imagine and this entity...Indeed do committed is Fanon to a unitary nation that he is dismissive of attempts at Federalism, calling it the product of tribalism.

He argued that tribalism gives way to regionalism and finds its expression in federalism. Though Fanon gives us insights into the



thinking of those who were crying out an indigenous socialist ideology and who captured a measure of state power in the 50s and the 70s, the policies enacted in furtherance of enforced unity led to dire consequences and the movement for a separate state in the North and the East. In hindsight, the post-colonial state may have followed another imperative but the legacy of third world nationalists such as Fanon have in fact produced a measure of despotism in many third world republics which claimed they were constructing an indigenous socialist nation.

While Fanon gives us insight into the thinking of the post-colonial state, he also helped us understand the phase of Tamil militancy. After the riots of 1983, the vanguard of Tamil resistance moved from established political parties to militant youth particularly the LTTE. The organisation of the LTTE and its mindset is more clearly articulated by Fanon than by any other theoretician of third world nationalism. Fanon glorifies the people but he does not trust them to lead the revolution. He accepts the fact that they must be led by intellectuals or leaders armed with the gun and the correct party line. For Fanon a political party exists only to guide the masses politically, it is not an end in itself or a forum for diverse opinions. He argues clearly in *Wretched of the Earth* that the people must be buttressed by an army and a central authority. They have to be controlled and directed.

A violent vanguard army led by a central authority privileges youthful males as the mainstay of the revolution. Both the LTTE and the JVP ideologies are captured by Fanon and celebrated as the only possible course of action in the Third World. Fanon is not concerned with dictatorship nor does he see any importance in non-violence. His only interest is that the correct line and the correct party capture state power using armed struggle as the only means. He searches for authentic intellectuals who will lead the party and carry on armed struggle.

The LTTE are a Fanonist party but espousing the one theme that Fanon resisted, regionalism in a post-colonial state. The LTTE have taken Fanon to a fine art in terms of what he believed a revolutionary party should look like but the cause they espouse is not the form of indigenous socialism espoused by Fanon who was clearly concerned with rise of tribal loyalties in Africa and their threat to the post-colonial state.

If Fanon is the theoretical mentor of the LTTE, others have argued that there has been a strong strain in Tamil political ideology of militarism and this militarism has been ignored in the last century. Gandhian activities and DMK politics in South India have given rise to a different type of political expression. But Sivaram in a series of articles in the *Lanka Guardian* states that there is a discontinuity in the perception that Tamils are non-violent. The British put forward the theory of martial races and did not include the Tamils. Since then there has been a sense that South Indian traditions are not martial. Sivaram questions this categorisation. He quotes Maha Kavi Subramanya Barathy and M. Raghavan Aiyangar, two main figures of the rationalist movement in south India and argues that they were in support of Tamil militarism.

The fundamental idea of Tamil militarism is that the Tamils are a martial race and that the rejuvenation of their martial traditions is necessary for national liberation.

Sivaram also argued that the Tamil nationalist imagination draws from dynastic history which is militarist as well as imperialist. He speaks of Cheran Senguttuv, a character in the popular third part of the *Silappathikaram*, who flies his flag on the Himalayas. He says this martial tradition of the Tamils has always been present but not privileged during the early phases. It is only now that the discourse is beginning to draw on aspects of this past. C.S. Lakshmi in an article also points to the prominence of warrior mothers in Tamil epic poetry, those who will not accept the bodies of their son if they have been short in the back or those who see their wombs as "lair for the Tiger" Again these are the new strands of Tamil history which are being resurrected now that the LTTE has given the Tamil community a martial face.

But Fanon is only one side of the picture. The LTTE structured in his imagery has played a dominant part in the Tamil nationalist movement. They are the most privileged group and they determine the nature and quality of Tamil nationalism as it is being experienced today.

They are a far cry from Anderson or Gellner but that does not mean that certain aspects of Tamil nationalism has not been influenced by Western models and western constructions or that Anderson and Gellner have not given us tools with which to understand certain aspects of the rise of Tamil nationalism, its history and its construction of identity.

The LTTE are the armed vanguard but there is also civil society. There is an inevitable tension in the interaction of the armed vanguard and the civilian population. There is resistance to Sinhala hegemony but there is also war weariness and a sadness which usually accompanies the strife caused by a decade of war. These aspects do not manifest themselves in political or military declarations but in the cultural expression of independent intellectuals. Despite the armed vanguard many of them continue to exist. A collection of poetry called *We Live Amidst Death* published in the 1980's reflects the alternative humanist tradition which is protected by some despite the vagaries of the war. There are street plays and poetry which capture this humanist contradiction in a community which on the face of it seems unified by ethnicity and war. If the voice is not heard in Jaffna, it is present in the writings of the many expatriate Tamil intellectuals who have left Jaffna because of the martial choices placed before them. Kalamogon is one such writer. He authors works in French and Tamil. His despair is perhaps more a reflection of the ideology of the community at this present date than the songs of martial warriors:-

**The Night**  
**I close my eyes**  
**And wanted to sleep quietly**

**eyes without sleep**  
**Oh! the shadows of blood**  
**of my brothers draped me.**