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**Settler Colonialism and the  
National Question**

**The Tamil Purist Moment:  
a Re-evaluation**

**Notes from Correspondents**

*Poetry: Carlo Tuzzi, Sivasegaram*

# Bandiera rossa

## [Red Flag]

*Carlo Tuzzi*

Forward people, to the rescue  
Red flag, red flag  
Forward people, to the rescue  
Red flag will triumph.

Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Long live socialism and freedom!

The exploited's immense formation  
Raises the pure, red flag  
Oh proletarians, to the rescue  
Red flag will triumph.

Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
The fruits of labour will be for he who works!

From the country to the sea, to the mine  
To the workshop, those who suffer and hope  
Be ready, it's the hour of vengeance  
Red flag will triumph.

*(continued on inside back cover)*

## *Editorial*

Sri Lanka became a visible target of international rivalry for influence and domination from 1978, when the country was opened to foreign capital and non-alignment abandoned in favour of the US. There was rivalry between the US, the USSR and India to dominate South Asia, but the non-alignment policy saved Sri Lanka from overt foreign meddling, despite the US 'punishing' Sri Lanka for steps taken in its national interest. Transformation of the national question into war by the UNP government enabled blatant meddling by India, which imposed a treaty on Sri Lanka, using which it invaded Sri Lanka in 1987. The war also let the US and its European allies exert influence in Sri Lanka, by way of supporting the government strategically and militarily and in the name of making peace between the government and the LTTE.

Early rivalry was mainly between the US and India, seen as a USSR proxy for some time. Strained Indo-US relations recovered after the Indian economy opened up, and now there are major military and nuclear deals. The US capitalizes on the anti-China paranoia of influential sections of the Indian establishment and plans to use India to encircle China. But, rivalry for domination in South Asia persists and reached a peak when India acted to wreck the US-backed peace talks of 2002-2006 in Sri Lanka.

The already growing trade, development and economic aid activities of China accelerated after Mahinda Rajapaksa became President in 2005. This trend was consistent with the growth of Chinese economic activities in many African countries then. The US and India which actively helped the Sri Lankan government to win the war were annoyed with China's growing economic influence in Sri Lanka especially since the influence rose despite China confining its role to supplying military hardware to the country as needed while boosting economic aid.

The US, annoyed by the 'disloyalty' of the Sri Lankan government despite its strategic support without which war victory would have been very expensive if not impossible, resorted to bullying in the name of human

rights and war crime inquiries. These moves failed and led to more defiance and reliance on China for economic development.

The envisaged threat to the global domination of the US by China's Belt and Road Initiative is a major factor in the recent trade war launched by the US against China, at risk to its own economy. The US-led campaign to stir fear of a China debt trap recently took the form a New York Times story, a rehashed but uncorroborated version of one published a few years ago charging that China put Sri Lanka into a debt trap whereby it took control of Hambantota Harbour and that it provided Mahinda Rajapaksa with massive funds for his unsuccessful election campaign in 2015. The story publicized by some local newspapers had no follow-up.

The US and India worked to ensure Mahinda Rajapaksa's defeat and the return to power of the overtly pro-West UNP in the elections of 2015. The project soon proved to be a political disaster. The government besides failure to keep its promise to review the Hambantota Harbour project and scrap the Colombo Port City project, both Chinese undertakings, agreed to a 99-year lease of the Harbour, with the Chinese company as major partner, and to resume work on the Colombo Port City.

India, more than any other, insists that the Harbour will be used by China for military purposes despite assurances to the contrary by China and Sri Lanka. It seeks its pound of flesh in the form of a right to operate the nearby Chinese-built airport and a major role in several other strategic projects. India resents China's growing economic role owing to its failure to impose some of its plans on Sri Lanka, like the coal power plant in the East of the island, thwarted by popular protest; and the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (earlier the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) dragging on for a decade owing to resentment of local industrialists and service providers. Of late, India has become very assertive and uses Tamil politicians to obstruct Chinese economic involvement in the North, like the construction of 40,000 houses by a Chinese company at very competitive prices as well to an archaeological exploration in the North by a team of Chinese scientists.

As the 'Good Governance' regime in Sri Lanka is in disarray, India chose recently to mend fences with Mahinda Rajapaksa to pre-empt a pro-China shift in the event of his return in 2020. Meanwhile it exerts pressure on the Sri Lankan government to expedite stalled Indian projects.

The renewed interest of Japan in providing further credit to Sri Lanka (already a bigger lender to Sri Lanka than China) may be seen as a move to wean Sri Lanka away from China.

The US is fast losing its grip on global affairs and the seemingly erratic conduct of President Trump could be by design: wreak havoc in countries targeted by the US and when things go awfully wrong make excuses by blaming it all on Trump.

The reality in Sri Lanka is that while the country is caught in rivalry between the US, India and China, with Japan drawn in for good measure, a campaign is in progress to identify China as the main economic and security threat to the country in order that the rivals, especially the US and India secure a strong role on the country, especially in matters of defence and investment involving control over territory.

Contrary to claims by pro-US and pro-Indian elements that the country is under Chinese control, the reality is that it is unable to defy US sanctions against Iran the way India, China and Russia are able to. So it is clear which power still calls the shots in Sri Lanka.

While the prospect of Chinese military presence in the country is remote, the serious problem facing the country is its growing debt and distorted perception of development. Loyalty to any foreign power will invariably lead to developments that are not in the interest of the people, and over reliance on foreign investment, export of labour and development of tourism are not ways out the economic mess of the country.

It is the responsibility of the genuine left and progressive forces of the country to educate the public on the importance of developing a national economy as the foundation of secure economic development.

# Settler Colonialism and the National Question

## Introductory Notes

European colonialism, initiated by desire to dominate trade, involved control over trade routes, trading posts and, later, territory followed by control of the economies of vast regions to ensure continued supply of raw materials and primary goods for profit as well as to feed capitalist production in the metropolis. The approach of each colonial power was based on capitalist development in the metropolis and on colonial rivalries. Plunder of mineral resources and primary goods in the colonies demanded the exploitation of native as well as imported labour.

Colonial strategy varied with the colonizer and the colonized. Direct control was feasible where the colonial power had the human resources to exercise control over colonial territory. Where resources were lacking, indirect control was exercised through a variety of agents. Direct control was not easy as it met with resistance and to sustain needed the acquiescence of the colonized population. A policy of assimilation was used by some colonial powers to enable direct colonial control.

Settler colonialism has been about replacing the original population of a territory with an invasive settler society that, over time, claimed a distinctive identity and sovereignty. Like all colonialism, it was marked by exogenous domination designed, implemented and defended by a colonial power. Replacement of the original population was by forced expulsion or elimination of a population or by subtle and seemingly legal means that undermined indigenous identity, which is accepted within the colonial system that placed the settlers above the original population in terms of

race and culture, in order to legitimise its preferential treatment of the settlers.

Settler colonial impact cannot be judged based on current perspectives. The US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa are settler-dominated states or their extensions. An understanding of settler colonial practice is needed to appreciate issues in countries subjected to extensive colonial settlement. Not all settlers came from the land of the colonial power. But settler elite had a racist outlook and affinity for imperialism. Significantly, the pro-imperialist ruling classes in former colonies adopt a settler colonial approach towards ethnic minorities in their countries.

Unlike conventional colonialism that looked to exploit natural and human resources, settler colonies went for land. While neocolonialism replaced conventional colonialism, settler colonialism continued as before even after the colonial power left, except in instances of total decolonization.

As Settler Colonialism is a phenomenon distinct from conventional colonial rule, it will help to make a note of the salient features of the main forms of colonial rule preceding Settler Colonialism. The paragraphs below address the matter mainly in the African context.

**Indirect Rule.** The British evolved indirect rule in India when they brought hundreds of Princely States in the sub-continent into their sphere of influence. The system was applied in other forms as well, like calling as 'protectorates' what were in fact colonies. Indirect rule was tuned to perfection in most British colonies in Africa. The benefit to the colonial power was that it needed fewer personnel to run the colony, incurred low infrastructural and administrative cost, minimised exposure to native resistance as control was through a local elite, overcame the language barrier, minimised exposure to endemic diseases and harsh terrain, and secured high levels of uninterrupted production owing to the availability of a steady supply of labour through middlemen.

The result was that it led to severe imbalance in development in the colonies, created and sustained local hierarchies with puppets of the

colonial rulers at the apex, and deepened existing social differences and divided communities. Less resistance to local chiefs and middlemen also meant unhindered exploitation of local labour and natural resources.

**Direct Rule.** Direct rule placed governing European officials at the top and the native population at the bottom. Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) had direct British rule, enabled by a sizeable well to do European community. The Germans who took Tanganyika (comprising mainland Tanzania and Burundi and Rwanda) by military force preferred direct rule there. However, Namibia (then South West Africa) was their settler colony. Germany also had protectorates in West Africa but its presence in Africa was curtailed by Germany's defeat in the First World War (WW1). Belgium acquired the colony of Congo with the connivance of competing European powers and terrorized the population under the personal rule of its monarch Leopold II. It was granted the territories comprising Rwanda and Burundi after Germany's defeat in WW1.

While direct rule was harsh and used force on the Africans to provide cheap labour and produce primary goods in the plantations and other sectors, colonist attitude towards the natives was utterly racist and repressive in every sense.

**Assimilation Policy.** French colonialists adopted this policy claiming that the aim was to assimilate Africans to French culture and thereby make them Black Frenchmen with the same status as any French citizen. Colonies were represented in the lower House of Parliament, to affirm political integration with France, and the assimilated African in the colonies was entitled to the same rights and privileges as a French citizen in the Metropolis. The colonies adopted the French civil and political systems, had close economic ties with France, and used the French currency. Africans were forced to learn French, follow French laws and become Christians. The policy served to justify colonial rule by claiming that the colonies were Overseas Provinces that were part and parcel of France. To be assimilated an African had to be fluent in oral and written French, be monogamous and undergo military training.

The Assimilation policy led to French becoming an official language in the colonies. It led to a wide gap between assimilated Africans and others and the replacement of many African traditional rulers with assimilated rulers who had adopted the French culture. The policy also proved to be expensive as it required much infrastructural investment.

The arrogant and patronizing attitude of the colonial rulers also acted against the stated aims of assimilation so that assimilation, like direct rule, had in practice European officials in top administrative positions and subjected Africans to colonial laws that exploited them through taxation and forced labour, while robbing Africa's natural resources.

Educational development in French West Africa was slow except in Senegal, partly since the predominantly Muslim hinterland people of West Africa had little interest in Christian mission schools. The elitist colonial education system had French as the medium of instruction. The curriculum, modelled after that in France, ignored the African context.

**Association Policy.** Association Policy followed the failed Assimilation Policy. Its stated purpose was mutual economic development for the Africans and the French. It acknowledged African culture, avoided imposing French culture on Africans, and granted freedom to develop separately. A corollary of the acceptance of traditional customs and traditions was that French criminal and civil laws did not apply to non-assimilated Africans, who were in regarded as second class citizens.

The Association Policy was authoritarian and denied Africans the right to freedom of expression, trade union activity and freedom of the press. It also discriminated between assimilated and non-assimilated Africans.

Things changed after Germany defeated France during WW2 (1939-1945), whereafter the Allies had to rely on Africans to overcome Germany. The colonial officials began to treat the African colonies like an integral part of France. In addition to the rights to elective deputation in the French parliament, a free press, trade unions, and political parties were able to develop in the colonies, but with little intention to let go of the colonies.

## Settler Colonisers under Colonial Rule

Among the most important features of Settler Colonialism are:

- Settler colonisers, unlike traders, soldiers and officials, intended to permanently occupy indigenous land and assert sovereignty over it.
- Settler colonialism sought state sovereignty and juridical control over occupied lands and indulged in expulsion or elimination of indigenous people.
- Settler colonial societies, after severing political ties with the colonial power, arrogated to themselves the powers of the colonial power to retain the unequal social order and power over the colonised.

To settler colonizers 'decolonizing' only meant transforming the disparity under settler rule subject to external colonial control into one where the settler has unchallenged authority. 'Decolonizing' also sought to assert settler rights by weakening challenges posed by claims of the indigenous people to their land, by means including genocidal practices.

Power hierarchy, territorial segregation and social formation are features common to settler colonial societies. The settler state exercised power through frontier police forces as well as through bureaucratic agencies who often held extraordinary power over indigenous peoples, including authority to apprehend children, prevent people from leaving reserved territories or expel individuals or families from the territories, control education and employment, and even to summarily direct police or military forces against indigenous people. These extreme powers were exercised based on carefully constructed racist narratives.

Claims of the natives to lands that were in long-term use by them were rejected by Settler Colonisation, which carved up the lands into discrete packets of private property for settler groups to develop. In the process, the properties acquired a settler identity and enabled a state to 'defend' their acquired territory under potential threat from indigenous people, portrayed as savage if not uncivilized and needing salvation by the

'civilised' settler state. Such dehumanizing portrayal of the indigenous people justified further predatory expansion beyond existing frontiers.

Settler colonists did not exclusively comprise an oppressor class and included oppressed and marginalized sections of a settler community who were placed at the forefront of settler colonial expansion.

Predominantly white settler colonies in what became the US, Canada and Australia maintained explicit dominance of whiteness until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by discriminatory immigration policies, privileging European immigrants and limiting or excluding non-White immigrants. The US made laws that discriminated against non-Europeans, especially Blacks, that limited non-white citizenship, codified racial designations using rules of hypodescent, barred racial mixing and legalized segregation. British racism was such that early immigrants including the Irish and Italians were discriminated against as non-Whites.

Such practices are no more, but the ideology and racial structure that favour whiteness survive. Ideas of white superiority, although stated less openly in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, are likely to survive as long as the privileged status of whiteness lasts, as will whitening as ideology and practice.

## **Settler Colonies in Africa**

Settler colonies in Southern Africa existed in South Africa; Zimbabwe and Zambia (then Southern and Northern Rhodesia); Mozambique and Angola; and Namibia (then South West Africa). Settlers arrived from Holland, Britain, Portugal and Germany, respectively. British settler rule also occurred in Kenya in East Africa; and state driven French settlement was strong in Algeria in North Africa.

The dominant settlers in South Africa, South West Africa and Algeria comprised a fair fraction of the colony's population. Settlers in Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Angola and Namibia, although only a few percent of the population, had sufficient political influence to justify calling them settler colonists, at least for the duration of colonial rule. Regional enclaves of settlers in German East Africa and Katanga (in

Congo) and small settler populations elsewhere had far less influence. All settlers wanted to make the colonies their home; the colonial power granted their demands for political and economic rights, and protection. Their prosperity was based on economic exploitation, and security demanded political oppression of the much larger African population.

An important feature of settler colonies was resistance to transfer of power to the native population. This made the struggle for independence violent, bitterly so in Algeria and Kenya. Settlers secured power from the colonial rulers through struggle in South Africa and by deception with the connivance of the colonial power in Zimbabwe.

Most settlers saw themselves as a superior race and avoided mixing with Africans except by way of extramarital affairs. This isolated them from local communities and, with expulsion and elimination harder than in the Americas, there were no large settler colonies except in South Africa.

After the end of direct colonial rule, settler rule persisted only in South Africa, with the largest proportion of European-African mixed people in Africa, whom the post-colonial racist regime identified as 'Coloureds'. Otherwise, people of mixed birth in Africa did not exist as a distinct ethnic group. Descendents of European settlers who stayed behind identified themselves collectively as Whites. In South Africa descendents of European settlers distinguish themselves mainly as Afrikaans and English speakers, with much smaller numbers of speakers of Portuguese and German, who tend to identify more closely with the Afrikaners.

## **Early Settlers in the Americas**

European colonists, besides conquering and governing territories in the Americas, created altogether new social structures based on mercantilism aiming to accumulate wealth through export trade. The colonies became sources of primary goods and cheap labour, and secure closed markets for the colonial power. Colonies differed based on native society and the economy imposed by the colonial power.

Spanish victory over the Aztecs and Incas led to a bureaucratic colonial regime, and urbanization reliant on an economy based on mining and commercial agriculture. However, the indigenous population remained a substantial portion of the population in Central America, Mexico and the Andes region, but not in the colonies that subsequently became the states of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. The social order mainly reflected the Spanish class hierarchy with the indigenous people, Africans and racially mixed people located below the Spanish settlers who sought a large measure of self-government from the Spanish Crown. The mestizo (Spanish-indigenous mixed race) people located themselves above the indigenous population that was the most oppressed and exploited. There was, nevertheless, greater racial fluidity than in North America.

Lowland Brazil and the Caribbean were not sources of mineral wealth until late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and the economy was based on export of sugar. Brazil under the Portuguese dominated the sugar market from around 1570 until the monopoly was broken by the British, French, and Dutch in the Caribbean by 1670. As the indigenous population was almost totally killed off or forced to flee, labour intensive sugar production in Brazil and the Caribbean relied heavily on slave labour from Africa, which made people of African descent a majority in the Caribbean and Brazil.

In plantations based on African slavery in the southern parts of what is now the US, the presence of European women among settlers implied less racial mixing so that the racial system became sharply defined and racial intolerance was towards black, indigenous and mixed races.

## **Post Colonial Latin America**

Large scale European settlement in Latin America followed independence from Spain. The settler elite, possessed by European values, looked forward to Europe for political models and concerned themselves with metropolitan areas, thus shunting out the vast majority from the task of nation-building. European liberal ideology came with a White racist outlook that was common to settlers in European colonies. Racialism

favoured the downgrading and rejection of dark skinned people as a whole, and the expulsion and elimination of indigenous peoples, whose place was taken by millions of new European settlers.

Notably, at least for a short period during the anti-colonial revolts of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century radical elements argued the case for the indigenous people. As pointed out by Richard Gott, a revolutionary junta in Buenos Aires declared in 1810 that Indians and Spaniards were equal, and celebrated the Indian past as common heritage. Famous leaders of Indian resistance such as Tupac Amaru and Mangoré were evoked. Early independence movements of Cuba celebrated Hatuey, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Taino chief from Hispaniola who became an anti Spanish resistance leader in Cuba. Campaigners for independence in Chile stirred up memories of Araucanian rebels of earlier centuries and used Arauco symbols on their flags. Independence in Brazil in 1822 saw a radical section of the white elite celebrating its indigenous ancestry to even suggest the replacement of Portuguese by Tupi, spoken by many Indians, as official language. (Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2006/nov/22/guardianweekly.guardianweekly1>)

While near the tail end of colonial rule and shortly efforts were made to include the indigenous population as citizens, the racist white elites in the century that followed sought to import European migrants to prevent sharing of power with the non-Whites. The inclusive agenda of progressive leaders in settler societies who sought friendship with the indigenous majority and incorporate them into settler society yielded to the interests of White racist elite. The Latin American holocaust of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century occurred owing to the economic necessity free the land from the indigenous people. The slaughter of Indians made more land available for settlement, and between 1870 and 1914 five million Europeans migrated to Brazil and Argentina.

Although the intended 'whitening' mostly failed, systematic European settlement that continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in many countries kept alive the hegemonic white-settler culture to this day. Despite the

emergence of a large population of mixed races, there are countries with large White populations like Brazil (91 million, 47.7%); Mexico (56 million, 47%); Argentina (35.7 million, 86%); Colombia (37 million, 18.2%); Venezuela (13.1 million, 43.6%); Chile (9.1 million, 52%); Cuba (7.16 million, 64.1%); Costa Rica (3.2 million, 82.7%); Uruguay (3.1 million, 88%) and Puerto Rico (2.6 million, 75.8%). Large indigenous populations exist only in Mexico (25.6 million, 21%) Guatemala (5.9 million, 41%), Peru (8 million, 26%), Bolivia (6.5 million, 62.2%), and Ecuador (4 million, 25%). The numbers based on data from around 2010 are highly disputable in the context of the difficulty of defining one's race in the context of centuries long racial mixing.

Serious attempts were made in some Latin American countries, especially Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, and Colombia to 'Whiten' the population using means besides large scale European immigration while restricting that of darker people, and encouraging racial mixing as a way of gradually lightening the total population. The target was mostly people of African origin as the indigenous people had been severely reduced in number in these countries.

In Brazil, a whitening ideology strongly influenced national goals. Brazil's racial composition was dramatically altered by slavery and birth of mixed-race children by often forced unions between Portuguese colonizers and African and indigenous women so that by 18th Century blacks and their descendants were a majority in Brazil. Overtly racist policies based on the supremacy of white races were adopted to reverse the trend. For instance, immigration of 1.2 million Europeans increased the White population from 37% in 1872 to 44% in 1890. Mass immigration halted with the onset of WW2, but 64% of Brazil's population was white by 1940. Then on, the brown mixed-race population increased, while the black population declined. European immigration to Venezuela failed to occur on a significant scale until after the start of WW2.

Active participation by Afro-Cubans in the struggle for independence from Spain at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century worried the White elitists in

power. They passed immigration laws investing more than \$1 million into recruiting Europeans into Cuba to whiten the state. US military presence in Cuba during in first decade of the century assisted the whitening of Cuba. The whitening policy failed since most immigrants stayed in Cuba and were there only for the sugar harvest.

In Colombia, European immigration proved unattainable, and the White elite resorted to interregional migration as a means of whitening. Thus the Whites of Colombia include significant numbers of non-Spanish Europeans as well as Arabs, mostly Christian, from Lebanon.

Argentina succeeded most in whitening by almost eliminating the Afro-descendant races. Similar practices were known in Uruguay too.

Among unsuccessful attempts at whitening by immigration was in Jamaica, where white immigration was weak and mixing with the Black population and migration to the US depleted the white population.

Richard Gott in his essay “Latin America as a White Settler Society” (Bulletin of Latin American Research 26(2):269-289, March 2007) argues that Latin America’s 19<sup>th</sup> Century record of extermination, immigration and Europeanization would place Latin America in the category of settler colonialism, usually associated with European powers excluding Spain and Portugal. Colonial settlement did not however lead to predominance of the nationality of the colonial power and the victims of settlement have in the past several decades asserted themselves more successfully than those in North America and Australia. This was because Latin America, like Africa, lacked the sustained economic development and political stability of settler colonialism in North America and Australia. Also, while Africa did not have sustainable territories where white settlers were a majority, racially hybrid Latin America lacked the ethnic and racial homogeneity characteristic of settler colonies.

## **Settler Colonies in North America**

Gerald Horne’s “The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North

America and the Caribbean” (Monthly Review Press, ) offers a comprehensive account of the sources of Settler Colonialism under British patronage.

The colonial society that evolved in British colonies which later became the United States of America (US), was based on land poorer in mineral resources than South America. Migration was encouraged by social changes in Britain, and by 1750 British settlers very much outnumbered Spaniards in the Americas. Settler desire for land for small-scale farming led to mass scale killing of the indigenous people by disease and war and by 1776, the population of North American colonies was predominantly European. Traditions of local self-government in the British colonies helped faster economic growth than under the bureaucratic regimes of Spanish controlled South America.

Settler theft of land if not by war was by treaty to the disadvantage of the indigenous population. Implementation of the treaties was rarely in the spirit of the treaty in matters of the rights of the indigenous population.

Independence from British rule was followed by continued westward expansion of the US throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century forcing native people to resettle further west, in breach of the treaty of 1785 with British colonial rulers. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized treaties to exchange Native American land east of the Mississippi River for lands to the west. Although relocation was in theory voluntary, native leaders came under severe pressure to sign removal treaties.

In 1851 the US Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act, creating the reservation system that forced native people to move to and live on reservations so that the native people moved away from land desired by white Americans. The Act also persuaded the natives of the plains to adopt the way of life of the white Americans by severely restricting their ability to hunt, fish and gather traditional foods and even forcing them to change their food habits. In 1871, Congress added a rider to the 1851 Act ending recognition of additional Native American tribes and prohibiting additional treaties. An Act was passed in 1885 allowing native tribes and

individuals to sell unoccupied lands claimed by them and legislation in 1889 allowed the opening of unassigned lands for settlement.

Although 300 or so of the Cherokee became the first indigenous people to become US citizens in 1817, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 restricted granting of citizenship so that it was only in 1924 that all Native Americans born in the US and its territories were eligible for citizenship.

A policy of assimilation was imposed on the indigenous people through the notorious boarding schools system that traumatized Native American children by forcing them to abandon their identities by denying the right to speak their own languages and practice their own religions, and in many other ways. The boarding schools were a failure and closed under the "Indian New Deal" of the 1930s which downplayed the assimilationist goals, and changed the purpose of schooling to emphasize vocational education for jobs in urban America, which was in effect assimilation by other means, and adopted by successive post-WW2 US governments.

Native American activism has achieved much for the indigenous people of the US who now have some control over their education and educate their young for jobs as well as to pass on their cultures. They now have all the rights guaranteed in the Constitution of the US, although questions remain over the jurisdiction of the federal government over tribal affairs, sovereignty, and cultural practices. Migration to urban areas continued to grow, and 70% of Native Americans live in urban areas in 2012 compared with 8% in 1940. But several rights issues remain.

Canada's attitude to its national question is often judged as healthy based on the handling of the conflict between 'English' and 'French' Canadians. The general impression that Canada is a tolerant society that respects the identity of ethnic minorities is, based on the seeming tolerance towards Third World asylum seekers, is belied by its record of oppression of the indigenous people who consider themselves nations in their own right.

Indigenous people's contact with Europeans was based on fur trade. The French entered as traders and relied on the natives for furs, while British

colonists arrived to settle and displaced them. The British crushed the indigenous resistance and sought to prevent renewed resistance. The indigenous people in French held territory went under British control following the defeat of France in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The influx of white loyalists and their indigenous American supporters into Ontario after Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence led to more demand for land. The British acquired most of the territory of the natives in return for a compensation that failed to match their loss of former fishing, hunting and gathering grounds. They instead received in exchange land later known as "Indian Reserves". The natives faced a ceaseless flood of settlers advancing from the east. Much of the territory ceded by the natives was by treaties which had not been honoured in their true spirit by successive governments in Canada, which were responsible for guaranteeing indigenous land rights contained therein. As a result, the indigenous peoples could not sustain ways of living vital to their cultures, health and well-being as well as opportunity to decide on economic development appropriate to their needs and aspirations.

The indigenous people, although weakened, have rebelled and resisted even after the founding of Canada, but only to be punished by the settler state. The struggle to defend their sacred lands is now a necessity because of continuing appropriation of their lands by developers and multinational corporations with the connivance of the state.

## **Settler colonialism in Australia and New Zealand**

Britain founded the Colony of New South Wales comprising Australia east of the 135<sup>th</sup> Meridian East in 1788 and adjacent islands, including much of New Zealand. A colony commonly known as the Swan River Colony comprising the rest of Australia was founded in 1829. The Colony of New Zealand was founded in 1840. Colonies on Australian soil were merged into the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. Papua New Guinea was annexed in 1888 and placed under Australian control until independence in 1975 as were the seven remote territories in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans and Antarctica that remain Australian.

Australia was a settlement colony to Britain, which declared it as “terra nullius” and seized Aboriginal land at will. European colonialism was driven by notions of European superiority. Most colonial settlements were enabled by persuading indigenous inhabitants by force or deception to accept colonial rule or trade the right to settle in part or whole. But in Australia possession was unilateral, based on claims of first discovery and effective control. While the Aboriginal people had special territories, their association with land was being on a traditional basis, the lack of a local system of land ownership and the absence of a group of supreme leaders to negotiate on behalf of the tribal groups ruled by councils of elders, made it easy for the settlers to avoid negotiation.

The land was sparsely populated making it relatively easy to settle in a location and avert threat from locals by taking advantage of rivalry among groups. All armed confrontation was on land, and the local people were no match to the settlers with superior weaponry and horses, unlike in New Zealand where the Maoris proved to be a formidable force.

Dispossession is mainly responsible for the plight of the Aboriginal people; and frontier conflicts, random killings, organized massacres, and deaths in custody and introduced diseases such as smallpox, influenza and measles caused a drastic decline in their population. Destruction and diminishing of traditional food sources by newly introduced animals and European farming methods, made the Aboriginal people rely on white settlers for their existence. Unfamiliar foods high in sugar and starches led to malnutrition, obesity and diabetes, aggravated by alcoholism.

Crueller was the policy of Assimilation that allowed forcible removal of non full-blood Aboriginal children from their families to be placed in institutions to integrate into white culture, breed with other “half-castes” or whites and eventually eliminate the Aboriginal blood line. The “Stolen Generations” are still campaigning for recognition of their suffering by removal from their families and mistreatment by their white guardians.

The annihilation of the indigenous population of the island of Tasmania to the south of the mainland deserves particular mention for two reasons:

firstly, Tasmania was the only settlement where genocide of the aboriginal people was almost total; secondly, it was in Tasmania that the aboriginals fought back to kill a significant number of the aggressors.

The colonial history New Zealand began as an extension of the Australian colony of New South Wales. In settler colonies outside Africa, only the Māori people, who were equipped to confront colonial settlers, averted genocide of the kind in North America and Australia, and made it necessary for the British to negotiate with their leaders.

A treaty signed in 1840 gave the Māori sovereignty over their lands and possessions and all the rights of British citizens. Motivated by a desire for protection from foreign powers, Māori chiefs accepted the establishment of governorship over European settlers and traders in New Zealand and in consideration of wider settlement enhancing trade and prosperity for the Māori. The English and Māori language versions of what Britain was offered are still a matter of dispute. The English text granted the British Crown sovereignty over New Zealand while the Māori text allowed only 'kawanatanga' (governorship) with less power.

From 1845 to 1872, armed conflicts known as the New Zealand Wars took place between the Māori and the New Zealand government, which used pro-government Māori forces besides its own military force and local militia. The government legislated to imprison opponents and confiscate large areas of land from the Māori, apparently to punish rebels. But land was confiscated from "loyal" tribes too. About half of it was later compensated or returned to Māori control but not to the original owners.

The Maori people, however, held their own against the settlers for a long period and thus delayed their marginalization sufficiently so that demographic recovery was fast, and they legally recovered many lost territories in late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **The Settler Colony of Israel**

A disastrous colonial legacy of Britain is Palestine, a different kind of settler colony discarded by Britain in 1947 after 30 years of control. Britain

honoured its pledge in its Balfour Declaration of 1917 "to favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people", but not the promise that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

Zionist settlement of Jews in Palestine was like the 19<sup>th</sup> Century White settlement in the Americas and Australia. Britain shielded Jewish immigration, supported Jewish settlement and subsidised Jewish defence, amid objections by some British officials in Palestine, to ensure creation of Israel at the expense of Palestine's Arabs. Britain was fully aware that the Zionists were smuggling arms into Palestine but did not interfere.

Britain during its mandate years in Palestine harshly put down mob violence against Jews, and with covert support from the reactionary monarchs of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Transjordan, fought for three years to suppress the Palestinian Arab rebellion against British rule following the Arab General Strike of 1936. That destroyed the military capacity of Palestinian Arabs rendering them too weak to be a serious challenge to the Zionists when battle for territory began in 1947.

The bond between Britain and the Zionist was strong. The 30 000 Jewish residents of Palestine who volunteered for the British army during WW2 became the core of the Haganah, later the Israel Defence Forces that defeated the Arabs in 1948. It is true that Britain attempted to limit Jewish immigration for fear of rise in anti-British sentiment in the Arab world, and it was forced in 1944 to respond in kind to extremist Jewish militias, which attacked British soldiers and policemen.

Britain passed the 'Palestine problem' to the UN, which voted to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, both with Arab majorities. By 1948, most of the Palestinian Arabs had left the Jewish part, either fleeing the war or driven out by Zionist terrorist gangs.

Israel's special relationship with British imperialism endured to the point of Israel invading Egypt's Sinai Peninsula to create a context for British and French intervention in Egypt following Egypt's nationalization of the

Suez Canal in 1956. Israel was ordered by the US to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula in 1957 to avoid the prospect of intervention by the USSR. The US had its plans for domination of the region and when Israel soon turned to it for support it hijacked Britain's role as the Zionist mainstay as well as a dubious broker between Jewish settlers and the natives.

Israel is today the chief ally of the US in the Middle East and has a strong influence on US foreign policy. Israel's expansion of territory has continued to include the occupation of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula (1956–57 & 1967–1982), Syria's Golan Heights (1967 to date), (South Lebanon (1982–2000), West Bank and East Jerusalem (1967 to date) and Gaza Strip (1956–57 & 1967–2005). Israeli settlement has continued unchecked in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, despite countless UN General Assembly resolutions denouncing Israeli aggression in Palestine. The outcome is that what was once a Palestinian territory under British control in 1917 now comprises tiny discrete patches scattered over the land mass, much like the territory of Indigenous people in the US, Canada and Australia.

Notably, there are among Israeli Historians at least a few who accept that Zionism under the British Mandate was a colonial enterprise. (see Charles Glass, "The Mandate years: colonialism and the creation of Israel" <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/may/31/londonreviewofbooks>). It will take until total decolonization of Palestine for such thinking to translate into justice for the displaced Palestinians demands.

## **The Settler Colony of Ulster**

The Ulster Protestant community comprises descendents of English-speaking Protestants settled in the Province of Ulster, which was almost wholly Gaelic, Catholic and rural and most resistant to English control. Settlers from Scottish Lowlands and Northern England arrived since 1606. The Irish Rebellion of 1641 led to the driving out of English and Scottish settlers in revenge for being driven off their ancestral land. The English Parliament passed an Act of Settlement in 1652 imposing penalties against participants and bystanders in the Rebellion and the subsequent unrest,

whereby all Catholic-owned land was confiscated and British plantations in Ireland destroyed by the Rebellion were restored. Settler population grew fast following the influx of Scottish Protestants as a result of famines in Scotland in 1690s, and Ulster had a Protestant majority in the 1720s.

Divisions between the Protestants and Catholics have played a major role in the history of Ulster, and of Ireland as a whole. There were also tensions between the mostly Presbyterian Scottish Protestants and mostly Anglican English Protestants. Penal Laws discriminated against Catholics as well as Presbyterians, to impose Anglican Christianity on them. Anglicans repression led to mass emigration of Presbyterians to North America in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and to the return of some to Scotland. Ulster Presbyterians become founders and members of the United Irishmen, a republican movement which launched the failed Irish Rebellion of 1798.

The Kingdom of Ireland became part of Britain in 1801. Industrialization of Belfast in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century attracted Scottish Protestant immigrants. Irish resistance to British rule matured into the Irish War of Independence in 1919. The British partitioned Ireland in 1921 to establish Northern Ireland comprising much of Ulster with a Protestant majority so that when Ireland won independence in 1921, Britain held Northern Ireland as part of its territory.

The Republic of Ireland which stood by its claim over the entire island of Ireland was far from achieving it. Militant opposition to ceding Northern Ireland to Britain persisted in the residual Irish Republican Army (IRA) founded in 1919 to fight for independence. The status quo remained in Northern Ireland and state discrimination against Catholics continued. The Civil Rights Campaign to end discrimination met with Protestant resistance that led to the riots of 1969. The partiality of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (Northern Ireland police force) towards Protestants in conflict with the Catholics worsened the crisis which was aggravated by the involvement of British troops.

Long-drawn negotiations since the 1980s amid continuing IRA violence, state repression and communal clashes yielded the Belfast Agreement of

1998 and the election of the Northern Ireland Assembly to which powers were devolved. Political violence, mostly by paramilitary factions, still persists in Northern Ireland as a residue of British settler colonial legacy, although to a less degree than during 1969-1998.

## **Impact of Settler Colonialism on the National Question**

Settler colonies as known in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries continue in some of the so-called overseas territories of the US, Australia and New Zealand, several of which are of geostrategic importance to imperialism. Others, except where the settlers were forced to leave, have stabilized as nation states or as ex-colonies where the minority settler community wields significant political and economic influence. An important feature of settler colonialism has been racism. The violence inherent in race relations in settler colonies led to forced marginalization of the indigenous people in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

A large mixed population emerged in Latin America alongside colonial genocide, well before the colonial white elite initiated moves following independence from colonial rule to settle Europeans and to whiten the society. The white racism that accompanied these settlers has been a major cause of the continuing racial discrimination and oppression. Racism and reaction have gone together in Latin America so that any Latin American government identified in some way with the interests of indigenous and Black people, irrespective of whether was socialist, was targeted by local reaction backed by US imperialism.

The European settlers after wiping out the indigenous population of the Caribbean settled African slaves to work in the plantations, leading to varying degrees of racial mixing. Racial composition varies widely in the Caribbean. Colonialism also added to the complexity of national and ethnic identity in colonies such as Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa (Cape Colony), Guyana, Trinidad, Malaysia (Malaya) and Sri Lanka by settling large numbers of indentured labourers, mostly from South Asia.

Settlers did not comprise a nation or a nationality in the conventional sense, and social hierarchy in Latin America is in many ways like the caste hierarchy of South Asia. Colour-based identity was divisive and peninsulares, mainly post-colonial European settlers, saw themselves as the most privileged group followed by Creoles comprising earlier settlers, and their wealth and social position helped them to dominate society. The meztizos and mulatos, comprising mixed races, were located above black and indigenous people. Sections of the meztizos and mulatos, who as a group had sufficiently risen socially and economically, were, at best, on par with the white elite, often a rung below.

African settler colonies ended after prolonged conflicts leading to formal power for the native majority population. Victims of settler colonialism with problems rooted in the colonial era include South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya. Although the settlers were seemingly overcome by the native majority, the legacy of the colonial regime persisted in terms of socio-economic impact and systems of government designed to protect settler interests. As the boundaries of African states were drawn by colonial conquerors without ethno linguistic considerations, imperialism was able to exploit inter-state as well as tribal rivalries and now religious issues to divide people and undermine 'hostile' or 'unfriendly' regimes.

## **The Predicament of Indigenous People**

It should be noted that the plight of the indigenous people in settler colonies and much of Latin America is like that of indigenous people elsewhere in the Third World where neo-colonialism and big capital join hands to expropriate the natural resources in territory occupied by them. The forced displacement of indigenous people in the name of development and brutal suppression of their resistance are all too common under neo-colonialism.

Economic development in the Third World submits to the pressure of global financial markets that sustain colonial relations in neocolonial form to ensure subordination and exploitation, and deny communities the right

to develop on their own terms. Influx of transnational capital to explore and exploit fossil fuels and minerals, besides plundering the mineral resources and wealth of the exploited territories, also leads to shortage of water in areas where water supply is already poor. Mega projects involving oil extraction, mining, clearing of forests and damming of rivers have a devastating impact on indigenous peoples and their environment by damaging the fragile eco system and denying livelihood to indigenous communities. Projects to meet the growing demand of the expanding urban population for water and electricity also damage the environment beyond the region of the project. Public health suffers by environmental deterioration and loss of ancestral lands while ethnic discrimination denies fair access for the oppressed to health care.

Mega projects also sow dissent within and between communities as the prospect of wage employment and trade opportunity tempts sections of the communities. Thus the indigenous people, who struggle against mega projects to defend their territorial rights and protect the environment, face the resentment of not only the government and big capital including MNCs but also sections of their own community.

Rapid urbanization in settler colonies did not lead to the assimilation and integration of the indigenous people, the need for which is contextual. Fairness demands that the state should accept heterogeneity as reality and engage with the indigenous people on more equal terms.

Problems of immigrant and indigenous minority communities in settler colonies are fundamentally different. Immigrants to Canada, US and Australia, irrespective of country of origin and cause of migration, envisage their future in the cities of their chosen lands, unlike indigenous people who have strong affinity to their home, to which they could return at will. To many, loyalty to their colonized homeland still comes first. That too contributes to the ready acceptance of negative stereotypes of indigenous people by 'new' immigrant groups, who can be indifferent if not overtly hostile to the demands of indigenous people for their rights.

The indigenous and black people of Latin America and the Caribbean, to whom poverty, stigmatization and exclusion have been structural, now demand their rights in no uncertain terms within and outside national borders. Many indigenous groups demand territorial autonomy and power to manage their resources, despite the hounding of indigenous protesters by the state. On the other hand, imperialists and their allies subvert the purpose of indigenous demands to instigate secessionism to make trouble for less obedient governments.

Popular movements in countries including Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru and Chile among others in Latin American countries have won state acceptance of cultural differences and multilingualism, but much remains to win. There has also been notable progress in constitutional recognition of indigenous ancestral rights over territory, environment, and resources in countries including Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador. Recognition of cultural and territorial rights, however, has not arrested discrimination against indigenous people and the effective denial of territorial rights in the interest of multinational corporations.

### **Addressing Indigenous Issues as a National Question**

Marxism took the initiative to address the national question and to propose the right of nations to self determination as a means of overcoming national oppression. Thus Marxists placed themselves at the forefront of defending the right to independence of nations dominated by colonialism. The national question has come a long way since direct colonial rule began to collapse after WW2. The loyal feudal/bourgeois classes to whom the colonialists transferred power have since indulged in national oppression. The victims of oppression are not only people who can be identified as a nation, based on definition of Stalin that essentially refers to eligibility to become a nation state. There are communities that well satisfy criteria concerning common language, common economic life and psychological make-up but fail to varying degrees in the matter of continuous territory. There are communities that share territory with others with whom they have little in common in linguistic and cultural

terms. What will happen to these identities cannot be predicted under the existing conditions of neo-colonial domination.

But the term national minorities seems inadequate to refer to indigenous communities with a long history of relatively independent existence as a social group with a distinct culture. The concept of nationality was introduced by New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party (NDMLP) of Sri Lanka to address the national question in countries with several social groups that qualify for the right to self determination as nations but face practical obstacles to exercise the right to secession.

The NDMLP proposed the extension of the right to self determination not only to nationalities that face difficulty in implementing secession as well as to national minorities. The manner in which the rights of minority nationalities have been accommodated by the USSR, China and more recently in Nicaragua and in principle by the Maoists of Nepal have lessons to offer, although the term nationality is at times avoided and reference is to national minorities.

The NDMLP studied the question extensively and, while reaffirming the right of nations to self determination and the implied right to secession, extended the right to self determination to people who qualify as nations in all respects but cannot secede for a combination of reasons including geographic factors. The NDMLP opted for the term nationality in place of nation was partly in consideration of the frequent association of the term 'nation' with a nation state. The prospect of identifying multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nationalities and accepting their right to self determination has also been favourably considered.

The approach of the NDMLP to the right to self determination was based on the principles underlying the recognition of the right of people to protect their identity, livelihood and way of life from expropriation, exploitation and oppression. The right to self determination was thus extended to all nationalities, irrespective of the feasibility of secession, allowing each nationality the right to choose its mode of existence and ensure maximum autonomy in the form of autonomous regions and sub-

regions and appropriate administrative structures. The NDMLP proposal treats as national minorities only communities that are either too small or too dispersed, while entitling them to autonomous inner structures that operate independently with language and cultural rights and assure rights to undertake financial, judicial and administrative measures.

The stand of the NDMLP is supportive of the right to self determination by indigenous people in settler colonies as well as of tribal populations in countries such as India where indigenous and tribal lands face the threat of appropriation or encroachment in the name of development. Demand for recognition as nations by some indigenous communities is a response to assimilationist moves that reject their status as a distinct nationality and dispossess them in the name of development. The historical justification for that demand that should be respected, and factors underlying calls for secession, whether feasible or not, is an issue that cannot be lightly dismissed. The case for maximum autonomy and right over the land and resources in what are or once were tribal homelands is strong. The term 'nationality' is preferred to nation, since the accepted definition of the latter is based on a nation state, whereas the former includes nations and people who could otherwise have constituted a nation if not for colonial intervention.

A genuine Marxist Leninists views the national question in the context of class and class struggle and recognizes the class nature of national oppression. Thus addressing the national question is an important aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle. The demand for recognition as a nation (or more sensibly nationality) and the right to self determination has to be placed in the context of global domination by imperialism. There are lessons to draw from the unqualified support of Marxist Leninists for Black Nationalism in the US in the 1960s and into the 70s.

The aspirations of indigenous people in the settler colonies cannot be confused with those of the post WW2 immigrants in Europe, North America and Australia. The stand against cultural imperialism is among factors that distinguish problems faced by indigenous people from those

faced by post WW2 immigrants. Imperialism now accommodates the linguistic, religious and cultural identities of recent immigrants, but is cautious in the matter of indigenous identities, as it knows the implications for national rights of indigenous people.

While all struggles against racial oppression deserve unqualified support, indigenous nationalism has to be placed on par with nationalism in the colonies. Thus the national struggles of an indigenous people in the settler colonies of the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand deserves support and encouragement, as continuations of the struggle against colonial oppression. In other former colonies, one's stand will be based on the specific nature of the issue, the class interests involved and implications for the unity of the oppressed people of a country and for the interests of imperialism and its bourgeois allies in the country.

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# The Tamil Purist Moment: A Re-evaluation

*K. Kailasapathy*

The place and role of Tamil language in the modern politics and social conflicts of South India (and one may add Sri Lanka) have been abundantly described in a number of monographs during the last two decades.<sup>1</sup> Besides the specific studies on South India, certain general works dealing with the Indian sub-continent as a whole or other regions of India in particular, have made passing references and observations that have helped focus attention on the subject.<sup>2</sup> One aspect of the language movement in Tamil that has not received the scrutiny it deserves is the *tanittamil*, 'pure-Tamil' movement, which in many ways highlights the more virulent features of Tamil revivalism. Although the pure-Tamil movement will, inevitably, be discussed in its socio-political context, the present paper intends to approach the subject from the vantage point of a writer's experience; more specifically the implications of the movement to creative literature and its ramifications will be analyzed to evaluate its importance, for while a certain amount of sociological data for the emergence of the purist movement has been examined by writers on the subject<sup>3</sup> the literary sources bearing on it have hitherto been largely neglected. Furthermore a study of instances of language prescription which is the main characteristic of the movement can be revealing for both the linguist and cultural historian.

The intellectual background to Tamil Nationalism has already been dealt with in recent studies to make any elaboration on it unnecessary here.

Suffice it to say that certain statements by European missionary scholars like Percival, Winslow, Caldwell, Pope and others<sup>3a</sup> kindled a sense of pride among Tamils about their heritage. The writings of these early Indologists contributed in no small measure to the discovery and interpretation of their past by Tamil scholars and writers. The enthusiasm and thrill with which the European savants presented the salient features of Tamil language, literature, antiquities and religion also instilled in these Tamil scholars a notion of uniqueness about their past glory that set them apart from other races and peoples of India, especially the Brahmin community (broadly identified as Aryans), who were portrayed as traditionally hostile to Tamil and constantly conspiring to elevate Sanskrit at the expense of Tamil, through a process of 'Aryanization' or 'Sanskritization'<sup>4</sup>. Rev. Robert Caldwell (1814--1891) was probably the first to adumbrate the idea.

It was supposed by the Sanskrit Pandits (by whom everything with which they were acquainted was referred to a Brahmanical origin), and too hastily taken for granted by the earlier European scholars, that the Dravidian languages, though differing in many particulars from the North Indian idioms, were equally with them derived from the Sanskrit...This representation...and the supposition of the derivation of the Dravidian languages from Sanskrit, though entertained in the past generation, is now known to be entirely destitute of foundation...The Orientalists referred to were also unaware that true Dravidian words, which form the great majority of the words in the southern vocabularies, are placed by native grammarians in a different class from the...derivatives from Sanskrit and honoured with the epithets 'national words' and 'pure words'... Tamil however the most highly cultivated *ab intra* of all Dravidian idioms can dispense with its Sanskrit altogether, if need be, and not only stand alone but flourish without its aid, and by dispensing with it rises to a purer and more refined style... So completely has this jealousy of Sanskrit pervaded the minds of the educated classes amongst the Tamilians, that a Tamil poetical composition is regarded as in accordance with good taste and worthy

of being called classical, not in proportion to the amount of Sanskrit it contains, as would be the case in some other dialects, but in proportion to its freedom from Sanskrit. Even in prose compositions on religious subjects in which a larger amount of Sanskrit is employed than in any other department of literature, the proportion of Sanskrit which has found its way into Tamil is not greater than the amount of Latin contained in corresponding compositions in English. Through the predominant influence of the religion of the Brahmins the majority of the words expressive of religious ideas in actual use in modern Tamil are of Sanskrit origin and though there are equivalent Dravidian words which are equally appropriate, and in some instances more so, such words have gradually become obsolete, and are now confined to the poetical dialect...In Tamil, few Brahmins have written anything worthy of preservation. The language has been cultivated and developed with immense zeal and success by native Tamilians and the highest rank in Tamil literature which has been reached by a Brahmin is that of a commentator. The commentary of Parimelalagar on the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar...is the most classical production written in Tamil by a Brahmin.<sup>5</sup>

These remarks made by Caldwell in his lengthy introduction, under the sub-heading 'The Dravidian Languages independent of Sanskrit' have had such an abiding influence over subsequent generations of Tamil scholars that they merit closer scrutiny. Phrases such as "pure words", "religion of the Brahmins", "native Tamilians" and "freedom from Sanskrit" etc. set in motion a train of ideas and movements whose repercussions and consequences went beyond the field of philology. Many socio-political and cultural movements among the Tamils during the last hundred years have without doubt been influenced in one way or another by statements of Caldwell: the non-Brahmin movement, the self-respect movement, pure-Tamil movement, the quest for the ancient Tamil religion, the Tamil *icai* (music) movement, the anti-Hindi agitation and the movement for an independent Tamil state, not to speak of the general revivalist movement

of Tamil literature and culture, owe, in different ways and degrees, something to Caldwell's zealous writings.

Be that as it may, it was P. Sundaram Pillai (1855-1897) who introduced some of these ideas into Tamil literature.<sup>6</sup> In his dramatic poem *Manonmaniyam* (1891) Sundaram Pillai made an innovation in the matter of the invocatory verse. Till then it was customary for authors to invoke a deity or deities at the beginning of a work. Sundaram Pillai wrote a "Prayer to Goddess Tamil" as the invocatory verse.<sup>7</sup> Composed in the *kali* meter which lends itself for singing,<sup>8</sup> the verse has since remained a model in Tamil literature.<sup>9</sup> In 49 of the 57 lines of the verse Sundaram Pillai paid homage to Goddess Tamil in a diction that was charged with emotion and ecstasy. Its impeccable literary quality is indisputable. But what concerns us here is its content. Sundaram Pillai made the following assertions. (a) Deccan is a distinctive division of the country (India), (b) Dravidam is pre-eminent among its constituents, (c) Tamil has universal recognition and fame, (d) Tamil is like the eternal God, (e) Tamil is the 'parent' of all the Dravidian languages, (f) Unlike Sanskrit (which became extinct) Tamil is a living tongue (ever young). In making these statements the author compares works in both Sanskrit and Tamil and asserts that Tamil works are superior in their imagination, morality, piety and social justice. For instance he says that those who know the *Kural* well will never accept the laws of Manu which discriminates between different castes and prescribes differing moral codes and justice. Likewise he says that those who are captivated by the enthralling *Tiruvagasam* will not waste their time in chanting the *Vedas*.

Sundaram Pillai was one of the pioneers in the study of the history of Tamil literature and there is no doubt that some of his contributions are noteworthy.<sup>10</sup> He was also active in other fields like religious studies in 1880's propounding the theory that the early religion of the Tamils were based on the *Agamas* which were later corrupted by the Brahmins who tried to reconcile the *Vedas* and *Agamas*. In this he was ably supported by J.M. Nallaswami Pillai (1864–1920) who started a monthly called *Siddhanta*

*Deepika* or *Light of Truth* in 1897 which served for many years as the rallying forum for non-Brahmin Saiva protagonists. However, Nallaswami Pillai was not anti-Sanskrit like Vedachalam.<sup>11</sup>

It is true that Sundaram Pillai was also drawing on certain Tamil literary sources which were jealous of Sanskrit and had portrayed Tamil as equal or superior to it. In fact, it is evident from the *Bhakti* poems of the Pallava period (circa 7 C. A.D.) that Tamil was beginning to be cherished as a sacred language and hence equal to Sanskrit.<sup>12</sup> But it is in the works of the late medieval authors like Kumarakuruparar, Sivapragasa Swami, Paranjoti Munivar, Karunaipragasar and the author of *Tamil Vidu Toothu* and others that we hear strident voices contemptuous of Sanskrit and placing Tamil on a divine pedestal.<sup>13</sup> And yet these voices were limited in their range of 'knowledge'. Sundaram Pillai imbibed the arguments of Caldwell and converted them into bases of a new religious creed. Furthermore Sundaram Pillai's predecessors had no 'scientific' authority to back up their statements. They were also not hostile to Brahmins as such. But Sundaram Pillai was apparently drawing on the philological discoveries (of Caldwell and others) and giving his statements the stamp of history, sociology, anthropology and philology.<sup>14</sup> Naturally his pronouncements acquired enduring prestige.

Another contemporary of Sundaram Pillai needs to be mentioned here. V.G. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870–1903) who was a graduate of the Madras University and Professor and head of the Department of Tamil at Madras Christian College had changed his name into Paritimalkalaignanar (Pariti – Surya, Mal – Narayana, Kalaignanar – Sastri) a pure-Tamil form of his original Sanskrit name.<sup>15</sup> Sastri too was influenced by the writings of Caldwell and wrote a book on Tamil language. He also wrote poetry, plays and novels. He adopted a classical style in his writings which made them somewhat difficult and heavy. However he was sensitive to new ideas and trends and was enthusiastic of innovations.<sup>16</sup> He was for sometime the joint editor of *Nanapotini*, a periodical published since 1897 in Madras by M.S. Purnalingam Pillai (1866–1947). In fact Sastri began

serializing his novel *Mathivanan* — which he titled in English, ‘A classical Tamil story’ — from the first issue of the magazine.

It is significant that the founder of the pure-Tamil movement had close ties with Sundaram Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri both of whom laid the foundations for the movement. S. Vedachalam Pillai (1897–1950) who changed his name into Maraimalai Adikal, after he started the pure-Tamil movement, was a Vellala from Nagapatnam in Tanjore district. At the age of nineteen (1895) Vedachalam went to Trivandrum along with his Tamil mentor Narayanasamy Pillai to meet Sundaram Pillai who had also studied under the same teacher. It would appear that Vedachalam had made a good impression on the Professor who gave him a testimonial recommending him for a post in colleges.<sup>17</sup> Vedachalam returned to Trivandrum the next year and spent about three months working as a tutor and delivering lectures on religion. During this period he came into contact with Nallaswami Pillai who was then a District Magistrate in Chittoor and very much in need of help to edit his Tamil version of *Siddhanta Deepika*. Vedachalam worked in the journal for some time before joining the staff in Madras Christian College. As has been remarked earlier, Suryanarayana Sastri was the head of Tamil Dept. there and Vedachalam worked as a Tamil Pandit in the College from 1898 to 1911. Sastri died prematurely in 1903 (within two years of the demise of C.W. Tamotharam Pillai<sup>18</sup> whose tutelage was valuable and fruitful for his academic career) but Vedachalam must have had close connections with him for at least five years.

Thus we see that before launching the pure-Tamil movement, Vedachalam had a preparatory period during which he had the benefit of learning, and discussing matters with active and eminent personalities like Sundaram Pillai, Nallaswami Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri who were propagating the “ideas concerning the antiquity and cultural self-sufficiency of the Dravidians”. It is probable that there were also other influences that shaped Vedachalam’s ideas.<sup>19</sup>

The genesis of the pure-Tamil movement has been described, albeit dramatically, by the biographers of Vedachalam.<sup>20</sup> It is said that while discussing the poetry of Saint Ramalingar (1823–1874) with his daughter Neelayathadci, Vedachalam opined that in a particular line the pure-Tamil word *yakkai* (body) would have been more apposite and aesthetically more satisfying than the word *tekam* which was of Sanskrit origin.<sup>21</sup> At the end of the discussion they decided to use thenceforth pure-Tamil words in their speeches and writings. In accordance with that decision both father and daughter changed their names to Maraimalai Adikal and Neelambikai, respectively. Likewise his journal *Nanacakaram* was renamed *Arivukkadal* and his Institution, *Samarasa Sanmarga Sangam* was redesignated *Potunilaik Kalakam*. These developments, of course, took place over a period of time. However, historically speaking, we may consider 1916 as the year in which Vedachalam launched the movement. (It is indeed interesting to speculate on its timing when we recall the fact that the Justice Party — officially called at the beginning the South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) — came into being that year.<sup>22</sup> The organization announced its birth with the publication of “The Non-Brahmin Manifesto” and proclaimed its aim to promote and protect the political interests of non-Brahmin caste Hindus. If not anything else, Vedachalam would appear to have chosen the perfect moment to “eliminate” Sanskrit — a language identified with Brahmins — from the Tamil scene.) In other words, as much as the SILF strove to “free” South Indian socio-political life from Brahmin domination, Vedachalam too wanted to “free” Tamil language and literature (and religion) from Sanskritic influences. Both movements were mutually complementary. Furthermore it may be pointed out that in spite of his professed abandonment of “non spiritual public activities” and retreat to his “Ashram” in Pallavaram in 1911, he did participate actively in both the anti-Hindi agitations of 1937 and 1948 — addressing public meetings and publishing pamphlets.<sup>23</sup>

We may now delineate Vedachalam’s concept of pure-Tamil. Being one of his main preoccupations he has written about it at different places in his works. In brief, he argues that language is the basis of civilizations and

hence its preservation and vitality is essential for a race like the Tamils; at all times it is the elite who have the capacity to direct the development of a language; the Tamil alphabets are sufficient and adequate to express all the necessary sounds and hence no reform is required; alien words will corrupt both the language and its speakers. But let his words speak for themselves:

That the Tamils were highly civilized in the past is not only deducible from their ancient literature but is demonstrated also by the researches of Oriental Scholars. Dr. Caldwell writes: "The primitive Dravidians do not appear to have been by any means a barbarous and degraded people. Whatever may have been the condition of the forest tribes, it cannot be doubted that the Dravidians properly so called, had acquired at least the elements of civilization prior to the arrival amongst them of the Brahmans"...In any case Dravidian civilization was predominant in India before the coming of the Aryans....The Dravidians were probably in a much more advanced stage of civilization....

Now, it is time we try to get at an idea of the factors that have contributed to the building up of such a Civilization...It is the peculiar good fortune of the Tamils that those halcyon days produced among them thinkers and writers of the right type, differing in this respect from their brethren of such contemporary Western civilized nations as the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Chaldean, the Aryan, etc. It is because of this vital difference that the Tamil Civilization endures against odds while others remain merely as archaeological curiosities. The language used by the Tamils continues alive and grows while the rest are all respectable dead languages. It is to impress this fact on our mind that the late lamented Professor Sundaram Pillai sang: "Oh! Tamil! If the whole world had been yours before the birth of the Aryan tongue which contains the four Vedas, is it too much to say that ye, are the first-born and eternal speech?" To those who deeply consider all these

facts it must be obvious that this enduring characteristic of the Tamil civilization is not a little attributable to its birth from the loins of ancient Tamil poets and scholars who bravely, wisely and unflinchingly held up the standard of Tamil culture. Writers of over 1800 years ago were careful to practice the art of writing in pure, well-chosen, simple and virile Tamil words. They would not weaken its strength and get themselves demoralized by indiscriminately admitting into its fold any extraneous word. A language loses its vitality if it is needlessly and thoughtlessly corrupted. So also a class of people becomes disintegrated and weak by harmful admixture. The great and deserving merit of the Tamilians is that, for more than fifty centuries, they have used their language with so great care and vigilance and kept it so pure and undefiled, without disintegrating it by reckless mixture with Sanskrit words, that we who are their descendants are enabled to speak now almost the same language they spoke then and derive the same enjoyment they had of their productions as if they had been the productions of our own age. For such legacies, is it possible for any of us to make an adequate return in an appropriate manner?<sup>24</sup>

These statements and claims need no explication. The author's indebtedness to Caldwell and Sundaram Pillai is obvious. But what is most striking is his notion of the role of thinkers and poets in the growth of the language. While his idea of the past is certainly romantic his prescription for the preservation and development of the language is elitist and betrays utter voluntarism. In it lies the strength and weakness of the movement he initiated.

Because of the fervour with which he presented his case and the prevailing socio cultural milieu, Vedachalam's call had considerable attraction. Although the number of people with total commitment to the cause was always small, it had, initially at least, a certain amount of vogue that was out of proportion to its actual strength. Given the fact that Vedachalam travelled around in South India and Sri Lanka to deliver lectures he

established contacts and changing names became fashionable among certain Tamil scholars, especially those who had some grounding in traditional literary scholarship. One of his early followers was Uruthirakodeeswarar who also lived in Sri Lanka for a few years. Another follower was S. Balasundaram who changed his name to Ilavalakanar<sup>25</sup> and wrote a number of books on Sangam literature. Some aspects of the linguistic implications of the Tamil purist movement have been treated by Dr. E. Annamalai in a recent paper.<sup>26</sup> As has been mentioned earlier the literary background will be considered here in greater detail.

Puristic movements in languages are not new and nor are they entirely a modern phenomena. However it may be correct to say that such movements have a tendency to be present in situations where national sentiments are awakened or strong.<sup>27</sup> The essence of purism has been aptly summarised by Wexler.

People have also frequently shown an inclination to direct the development of their language by proposing that certain existing linguistic elements be either dropped or retained while still other elements be introduced into their language. These activities of labelling and regulating linguistic elements are invariably characterized by recourse to some previously defined preferential norms, usually consciously formulated by the native speakers themselves. The terms "purism" and "puristic trends" are widely used to designate instances of language evaluation and regulation where speakers are generally opposed to elements in their language."<sup>28</sup>

The Tamil purist movement had, as the object of elimination foreign elements like Sanskrit (and English) words that had and were finding their way into Tamil.<sup>29</sup> These were to be replaced by native elements. (In practice the attack on English was less vehement and often purely symbolic. For as we shall see, Vedachalam himself wrote frequently in English and as time went on, particularly after the anti-Hindi agitations argued for the retention of English as the main language. In a peculiarly patronizing tone he once wrote "therefore, the safe, precious and inspiring

examples, to be followed for building up a solid and substantial future are available only to the English and the Tamils").<sup>30</sup>

Viewed historically, one might *a priori* concede that there was a felt need for crying halt to the indiscriminate and sometimes wanton use of Sanskrit words in Tamil. As part of the commentatorial literature, a style of prose evolved in Tamil using not only a very high percentage of Sanskrit loan words, but also unadapting them to Tamil phonemic system and translocating a great number of structural features of Sanskrit into Tamil. Furthermore a poet like Tayumanavar (circa 1706–1744 A.D.) could write whole lines comprising Sanskrit words. This mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil was called *manipravala*, like a necklace of gems and corals. The Vaishnava philosophical writings excelled in this type of prose.<sup>31</sup> With the given lead in educational and social standing the Brahmins were prone to adopt this type of style. But it must be pointed out that in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries the non-Brahmin caste Hindus too wrote, if not in *manipravala*, certainly in a highly Sanskritized idiom. With the increase in the reading public and popular education there was a necessity to rectify this absurdity. Furthermore, *Virasoliyam* the grammatical treatise (circa 12 C. A.D.) had legitimized the *manipravala* style and subsequently a few commentators to the *Tolkappiyam* and the 17<sup>th</sup> Century grammarian Swaminatha Desigar asserted that Sanskrit grammatical rules applied to Tamil as well. These trends naturally provoked reaction<sup>32</sup> among Tamil Scholars and Vedachalam was, in a way, giving form and shape to such sentiments. But the manner of his reaction was extreme and as will be shown below, in the end, self defeating. As long as the pure Tamil movement overlapped with the general revivalist trend it evoked general support. But the main thrust of the linguistic (and cultural) fervour was for the development of Tamil into new branches of knowledge and experience which basically required a sense of freedom and variety. But Vedachalam's concept of pure-Tamil was in effect a return to the glorious past — the time of the *Canror*, the Sangam poets<sup>33</sup> — whose poetic language was supposed to be free from Sanskrit admixture. In choosing or opting for the old Tamil, doubtless archaic and unintelligible to large

numbers of people in modern times, Vedachalam was trying to swim against the current. There were two issues involved and he mixed the two together.

It is well known that traditional diglossia has existed in Tamil in the form of Centamil, classical language, and Koduntamil, vulgar language and these two “have long-established, functionally separate roots in the same society”.<sup>34</sup> Besides the above classification which was fundamental, the grammarians also spoke of valakku, spoken, colloquial (style) and ceyyul, literary, poetic (style). Until the first quarter of this century, the spoken language was rarely committed to writing. (Western missionary scholars like Beschi,<sup>35</sup> Caldwell and Pope<sup>36</sup> were quick to perceive the diglossia situation and came to terms with it.)

Partly as a result of the impact of English and also due to the changes in the Tamil society, the main effort in modern Tamil has been towards the creation of an effective, simple and standard language. This drive manifested itself first in prose and subsequently in poetry. The achievement of a person like Arumuka Navalar (1822–1876) is precisely this. Although he never used colloquialisms, “he wrote simple elegant but grammatically correct prose”. That is why he is considered “the father of modern literary prose”.<sup>36a</sup> Navalar who had a hand in the translation of the Bible, benefited from his education in a Methodist missionary school in Jaffna and made many innovations in writing. Later in his polemical writings against the Christians and Hindus he adopted a rhetoric that almost approached the speech rhythm of his times. He was also the first to introduce public speaking in Tamil.<sup>37</sup> Navalar of course, used Sanskrit loan words in Tamil but adapted them to Tamil phonemic system. Similarly Subramania Bharathi (1882–1921) the father of modern Tamil poetry was committed to writing in an idiom that could be readily understood by the average person. The very success of Bharathi and his place in modern Tamil literature is mainly due to his use of simple, popular language. Thus we see that, both in prose and poetry, the mainstream was towards ‘modernization’ and ‘simplification’ of the literary language.<sup>37a</sup> The task

was not easy and the process is still on. Naturally, there was and is some opposition to this process of using an increasing amount of popular language. The question of a standard Tamil is still not settled. But Vedachalam's attempt to preserve not only the classical Tamil but also make it free of Sanskrit was doubly retrogressive. It was an impossible task. But he persisted. Besides writing theoretical essays on the subject of purism, language preservation and planning, Vedachalam endeavoured to preach by his own practice too. By 1916 he had already published nearly a dozen books which had Sanskrit words in them. It is probably true that even before 1916 he used Sanskrit words sparingly.<sup>38</sup> But he now set out to revise his works and began to expunge the Sanskrit words interspersed in them. As is to be expected he was also interested in dictionary writing and coining of terminology. Sociolinguists characterize such activity as part of the process of modernization of a language. Ferguson's observation is apt:

The efforts of language planners generally focus on the production of glossaries and dictionaries of new technical terms and on disputes about the proper form of new words, when the critical questions seems to be that of assuring the consistent use of such forms by the appropriate sectors of the population.<sup>39</sup>

The purists in Tamil first took up positions in this matter (under the leadership of Vedachalam) during the 1930s when the need for text books and other reading material in Tamil led to some organized efforts. The Madras Presidency Tamil Association (with government patronage and support) constituted a Committee for Scientific and Technical terminology in 1934. It published initially a volume of ten thousand technical terms in Tamil pertaining to nine branches of study.<sup>40</sup> C. Rajagopalachari as Chief Minister of Madras was keenly interested in the project. (He was confident that science could be taught in Tamil but given his family and social background was not a purist.)<sup>40a</sup>

During the time when the glossary was being prepared "disputes about the proper form of new words" erupted. With the view to obtain a consensus and greater participation of interested persons the Committee

conducted a number of seminars and conferences,<sup>40b</sup> which also provided the forum for conflicting viewpoints. Basically there emerged (as is often the case till today) three points of view: (1) the 'cosmopolitan', (2) the 'Sanskritic' and (3) the 'puristic'. (In each school of thought there were extremists as well as moderates.)<sup>41</sup> Broadly speaking the English-educated liberals, especially those seriously concerned with the development of the sciences, comprised the core of the cosmopolitans. They argued the case for the adoption of foreign (English) words into Tamil for efficacy, economy and expediency. They were aware of the need for intertranslatability.<sup>42</sup> The 'Sanskritic' school was predominantly championed by 'nationalists' and 'integrationists' who felt that Sanskrit was the fountain of technical vocabulary for the whole of India and citing the analogy of Latin and Greek forming the base for technical terms in European languages pleaded for leaning on Sanskrit. This school probably had many Brahmins supporting it.

The 'puristic' school marshalled all the evidence in support of the purity and self-sufficiency of Tamil and argued that the inherent nature of Tamil language (words being formed from roots) would facilitate the coining of precise and pleasing terms. Vedachalam's opinion may be seen in one of his book of essays.

Tamil is an independent language with a rich store of words capable of expressing in a skilful hand all kinds of thoughts that appear in the different branches of learning.<sup>43</sup>

The purists were also opposed to the use of *Grantha* alphabet in Tamil, especially in technical terms. Vedachalam's daughter Neelambikai was active during this period and with the help and under the guidance of her father, published two Dictionaries of Sanskrit loan words in Tamil and their equivalent pure Tamil words.<sup>44</sup> She also wrote a monograph on the development of Tamil language. Judging from the various glossaries in Tamil dealing with science, law, administration, commerce, etc. that have been published since then, both in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka, it would appear that the puristic school has had definite impact.<sup>45</sup> But more often

than not the terms in the glossaries have never gained currency in usage. A leader published in the *Madras Mail* (May 28, 1927) seems to have registered the point.

Fortunately such purists do not control the growth of a language. That is the work of the common people. The purists may frown at slang, they may grumble that the language is being debased by slipshod and lazy talkers and writers, but fifty percent of what they condemn eventually finds its way into the language, to be defended by a later generation of purists as violently as the earlier fought for its exclusion. Language cannot be successfully cribbed cabined and confined.<sup>46</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the influence of Vedachalam and his followers on those engaged in the preparation of glossaries and dictionaries has been significant. But two important forms of discourse in the process of modernization are the news and feature stories of the press and radio.<sup>47</sup>

It is in this important aspect that the purists were always pushed to a defensive position if not utter helplessness. The real problem insofar as Tamil was concerned was the existence of traditional diglossia and the urgency for a 'standard' language adequate for communication in the context of modern life. In that sense Vedachalam's grand crusade was really charging at the windmills; the actual battle was elsewhere. Nor was Vedachalam's campaign of any immediate importance or advantage for the ruling elite, who were quite happy with the English educational heritage.

Although Vedachalam made periodic sallies into the socio-political arena, he was never in the front line. Nor were his periodicals reaching the common man at any time. His journal had a circulation of less than 300 copies. As a result it was personalities like T.V. Kaliyanasundaranar (1885–1953) scholar, publicist, politician and pioneer trade unionist or C. Rajagopalachari (1878–1972) statesman, scholar and writer or Kalki (R. Krishnamurti 1899–1954) social worker, writer, organizer and journalist, or C.N. Annadurai (1909–1968) politician, dramatist, orator, or P. Jeevanandam, agitator, trade unionist, publicist, who were decisive in

shaping the form of the modern prose. The politicians, popularizers and propagandists used the language as a medium of communication. The newspapers in particular helped evolve a standard Tamil that was always close to the idiom of the people. And because Vedachalam and his disciples were restricted by their concept of classical- and pure-Tamil they were never in the picture.

It is interesting to note that the novel too has played its role albeit obliquely in deflating the altruistic claims of the purists. Among the unforgettable characters created by Rajam Iyer (1872–1898) is the erudite but naive and impractical Tamil pandit Adusapatti Ammaiyappa Pillai, who has since remained the prototype of a pedantic Tamil teacher speaking in obsolete language. His flawless but fossilized and funny, utterances are in sharp contrast to the lively and vibrant conversations of the other characters. Subsequent novelists, playwrights, cartoonists and film makers have often utilized such characters for evoking laughter.<sup>48</sup>

But the real weakness of the purist movement showed up in its inability to generate any form of literary creativity. For, starting with the religious revivalism, it was more in literature that the Tamil Renaissance found its maximum outlet and noteworthy accomplishments. The novel in particular, has been in vogue since 1876 and except for a handful of novels written now and then in pure-Tamil all of them show a wide variety of linguistic patterns. Virtually all the dialectal forms have found their way into the novel. From Rajam Iyer who wrote “the first real novel in the language”<sup>49</sup> to Rajam Krishnan the contemporary novelist who handles socio-political themes realistically, the novelists have touched upon all dimensions of the life of the people both in its private and public aspects. The history of modern Tamil prose is largely the history of the novel.<sup>50</sup> Some of the finest prose-writers like Rajam Iyer, Madhavaiya (1872–1925), Bharathi, Kalki, R. Shanmugasundaram, T. Janakiraman, T.M.C. Ragnathan, G. Alagiriswamy (1923–1970), D. Jeyakanthan, S. Ponnuthurai, K. Daniel and L.S. Ramamirtham are also remarkable novelists. Many of them were also journalists.

Now, Vedachalam himself published two novels, *Kumutavalli* (1911) and *Kokilampal Kaditankal* (1921) in pure-Tamil. Both were adaptations from English works of fiction which are considered mediocre: the former, *Kumutavalli*, was a Tamilized work of a story by G.W.M. Reynolds (1809–1873). Vedachalam remarked in his lengthy English preface that the original was a celebrated work and he was rendering it into Tamil as an exemplary creation. (This of course reflects on his literary taste and judgement.)<sup>51</sup> But more than literary or aesthetic considerations he was once again using the novel as a pretext for his puristic crusade.

Although the Tamil language is pliant and rich in vocabulary capable of conveying the finest shades of meanings, yet in all the Tamil novels published in a decade or two the diction is rendered very unwholesome by the introduction of unassimilated foreign words from Sanskrit and other languages and by the unhappy combination of words and phrases.<sup>52</sup>

Except for the fact that *Kumutavalli* was prescribed as a text for examinations held by the Universities of London, Madras, Annamalai and Sri Lanka at different times, it was never considered a serious work of fiction by the Tamil readers. Apart from its rigid, archaic, monotonous and grave style, the content of the novel too was remote and unfamiliar — the story taking place in an imaginary Tamilnadu of the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. “In his enthusiasm to maintain purity Atikal even resorted to the use of certain archaic forms of literary expression”<sup>53</sup> which found its peak in a work like this. Suryanarayana Sastri too wrote his *Mathivanan* in a language which “exhibits all the worst features of linguistic purism and the artificial introduction of stilted phrases”.<sup>54</sup> His disciple and biographer N. Balarama Iyer (1875–1943) too wrote the novel *Leelai* (1897) in a similar style. These writers were probably motivated by the desire to see their works prescribed as literary texts for examinations.<sup>55</sup> But such attempts ceased with the works of Vedachalam. The readers of the fiction from 1920s had access to a variety of novels that were being written in easy and elegant style and hence had no patience for a language that was frequently

unrecognizable to them. Thus ended the abortive attempt of the purists to enter the world of creative writing. It is true that a few poets like Bharathidasan (K. Subburathnam 1891–1964) and his followers — Suratha, Mudiyyarasan and Vaanidasan — were exponents of pure-Tamil poetry. Bharathidasan was a disciple of Subramania Bharathi, but later embraced the self-respect and pure-Tamil movements. Due to his allegiance to the DMK doctrines he became popular among non-Brahmin readers and was the unofficial “Poet-laureate” of the DMK. He was called *paventar*, king of poets. However he never adopted archaisms and was also flexible and relatively simple in his style. But perhaps, because of his obsession with purism, anti Hindi and anti Brahmanism and other issues, his poetry suffered. Says Zvelebil: “Bharathidasan — only a few years after his death — sounds slogan-like, proclamative, flat and full of hollow rhetoric.”<sup>56</sup> This sums up the attempts of the purists to use their language as literary medium.

The most powerful and productive literary group that sprang in 1930s was called after the short-lived but scintillating journal *Manikkodi*. It was started by two veteran journalists K. Srinivasan and T.S. Sakkalingam, with Va.Raa. (V. Ramaswami Iyengar 1889–1951) as the editor. Va.Raa. who was an admirer of Subramania Bharathi and wrote the first biography of him, made the journal the forum and centre for literary experimentations. He was one of those rare personalities who could inspire promising writers without patronizing them or inhibiting their ideas. Although the journal was inspired by patriotic and Gandhian ideals it soon emerged as a quality magazine devoted to serious literature and criticism. In the previous decades V.V.S. Aiyar (1881–1925) had been the leading figure in literary activity.<sup>57</sup> He was the first to write original short stories in Tamil (1910) and also introduce modern literary criticism and comparative studies. The writers who gathered around *Manikkodi* had not studied Tamil as a discipline. They came to Tamil writing having studied Sanskrit, English, Philosophy, Economics, Medicine etc. They were influenced by British, American and European literature between the two world wars, and of course by the achievement of Bengali writers. To some

of them, literature was a vocation. Putumaipittan (S. Virudachalam 1906–1948), the greatest short story writer in Tamil, was one of the members of this group. He was (in spite of his pseudonym which meant “he who is mad after novelty”), well grounded in traditional Tamil literature, which naturally gave him an edge over his fellow writers. As Zvebil observes, some of his stories may be favourably “compared with highly developed story-writing of world literature”.<sup>58</sup> But one person does not make a movement. Besides Putumaipittan, K.P. Rajagopalan (1902–1944), N. Pitchamurti (1900–1976), B.S. Ramaiah, C.S. Chellappah, P.K. Sundararajan, Mauni, L.S. Ramamirtham and others wrote short stories, poems, new-verse, criticism, polemics and political commentaries. Most of these writers were romantics, whose individualism, aesthetic commitment and creative zeal called for felicitous, sensitive and unrestricted language and style. To them pure-Tamil was intellectually and emotionally abhorrent. The sheer power of their works and the others who followed them, established the *marumalarchi natai* — the style of renaissance — as the principal medium of literature and communication.<sup>58a</sup>

These writers were not content with creative work alone. Bharathi and V.V.S. Aiyar had written occasional essays on the nature of literature. But these writers, concerned as they were, primarily with contemporary literature and its problems, went into the question of the appropriate prose for different genres of literature and wrote penetrating articles on the subject. Va.Raa. was of the conviction that “one should write as one speaks”.<sup>59</sup> But others like Putumaipittan, C.S. Chellappah,<sup>60</sup> K.N. Subramanyan, N. Pichamurti and Ilangaiyarkon were more subtle. Their articles were analytical and persuasive. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, the illustrious editor of the Tamil Lexicon and one of the outstanding textual critics and literary historians took a sober view of the problem and wrote in favour of simple and effective prose.<sup>61</sup> Himself a scholar with scientific objectivity and scrupulous exactitude, his support gave some moral strength to the creative writers, who were standing up to the ferocious onslaught of the purists (and traditional Tamil scholars). But the *Manikkodi* writers got

backing from one unexpected quarter though. T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar (1882–1954) popularly called *Rasikamani* — ‘connoisseur par excellence’ — was a gentleman of means and leisure who spent his time in the enjoyment of poetry, especially in the company of selected friends. A sort of an anti-intellectual with an impressionistic approach and endowed with graceful eloquence, he was an institution by himself lending his support to cultural movements. Being a gifted conversationalist, he was of the opinion that “you should write as you would speak”. He never hesitated to use Sanskrit loan words if he felt it was appropriate although he was capable of coining words for new concepts.<sup>62</sup> Chidambaranatha Mudaliar was an intimate friend of C. Rajagopalachari and Kalki, and wrote regularly to the weekly, *Kalki*. Primarily concerned with cultural values, he resented the regimentation and pedantry of the purist school.

Yet another factor too worked against purism from about the 1950s. Both in South India and Sri Lanka, post-Independence problems created the conditions for a band of writers who came from traditionally oppressed sections of Tamil society, i.e. the lower castes. Many of them were attracted by Marxism and communist organizations which provided them with a world view and also the confidence to struggle against exploitation and articulate their thoughts and feelings freely. As might be expected, their level of literary education was somewhat low. But they ushered in new experiences and visions into fiction, poetry and drama using hitherto unheard of dialects, idioms and expressions.<sup>63</sup> They were indifferent to “correct” Tamil itself as taught by school teachers; pure Tamil was of no concern to them: they in fact openly despised it and ridiculed its proponents. To them linguistic restrictions or restraints were akin to social and political oppression and all such barriers had to be broken down. Harrison’s general observation in a slightly different context seems applicable here.

Where language differences tend to coincide with class distinctions, language conflict is apt to coincide accordingly with the lines of social conflict, greatly increasing it. And if the language of the lower classes is

spoken by them at a time when they increase in numbers, or when they gain a bigger share in political and economic power in the society, then the language quarrels will be part of a general process of their elevation in the society and of their gradual bid for increasing social power.<sup>64</sup>

Viewed in sociological terms, the exclusiveness of the pure-Tamil movement, its alienation from the literary mainstream and the social pressures from below sealed its fate. By the Thirties, pedantic, scholarly (writing was practically dead, and the purist trend was sterile).<sup>65</sup>

This inescapable weakening of the purist dogma was bound to reflect on the movement itself. Nambi Arooran has analysed the percentage of Sanskrit words in Vedachalam's works at different times.<sup>66</sup>

<i>Year</i>	<i>General theme</i>	<i>Literary theme</i>	<i>Religious theme</i>	<i>Averages</i>
1902	21%	7%	22%	16%
1911	28%	10%	16%	15%
1921	9%	3%	8%	7%
1931	6%	5%	5%	5%
1941	10%	9%	9%	9%

Explaining the increased percentage of Sanskrit words in Vedachalam's latter works, Nambi Arooran conjectures that his failing health and old age vitiated the vigorous pursuance of his ideal. But it would be more logical to surmise that Vedachalam had reached the limits of pure-Tamil writing and the inevitable relaxation and compromise were taking place. Such a line of argument is strengthened by the fact that while dealing with non-literary themes he had perforce to use more Sanskrit words. The table indicates that the percentage of Sanskrit was highest in works pertaining to general themes. This fact is crucial. The whole point of developing a language for modern needs calls for quick and easy communication in a medium that would cause the least delay and confusion. Vedachalam himself must have recognized this problem as is shown by the fact that at

times “he found it necessary to limit his pure-Tamil style while communicating with his readers”. In other words he had to make concessions to his readers. But, by and large, he stuck to his position, arguing that the readers of his work should make an effort “to catch up his high and pure style which was the only way to increase one’s vocabulary” and knowledge of the language. It is interesting to note that Dr. Raghuvira one of the most prominent and enthusiastic proponents of pure Hindi movement once retorted to Nehru (who had complained that though a Hindi speaker himself, he found it difficult to understand documents in pure Hindi) that “the attitude of the educated Hindi speakers to the new style should be that of a learner, a receiver”.<sup>67</sup>

As has been indicated earlier, the purist movement lost momentum in the late Thirties and early Forties. Some causes have been pointed out; a rounded statement may be attempted now. Wexler adduces four major reasons for the ultimate discrepancy between prescription and performance in language purism.<sup>68</sup> (1) Regulators are frequently not consistent in implementing their principles. (2) Regulators may frequently disagree with one another, and a single trend may include supporters who differ in their interpretations. (3) Prescriptive norms may change through time with the result that new recommendations can both supersede and coexist with earlier recommendations. (4) The public fails to heed prescriptive pronouncements.

These four factors have, in varying degrees, been operating in the Tamil purist movement too. For instance, while the extremists would have no Sanskrit words at all, the moderates were prepared to accommodate them provided they are changed to suit Tamil orthography and pronunciation. We have also pointed out the inconsistencies in Vedachalam’s practice<sup>69</sup> and the compromises he had to make.

I must conclude now with a few remarks on the socio-political aspects of the purist movement. It was pointed out at the beginning of this paper that the launching of the purist movement coincided with the formation of the SILF (Justice Party). Notwithstanding the differences between politics and

culture in the tempo of their development, one is able to see certain broad parallels in the rise and fall of the Justice Party and the pure-Tamil movement. Both were started by non-Brahmin upper caste personalities drawing support from educated, wealthy and pro-British personages. They were never really popular movements; under their broad slogan of Dravidian nationalism and its ostensible unity were hidden several conflicts, contradictions and confusion. At times they even seem to have functioned with a certain amount of cynicism and double standards. In the Thirties, the Justice Party ran out of fuel being superseded by the Self-Respect movement, which in turn gave way to the more militant DK and DMK. Likewise the pure-Tamil movement merged with the anti-Hindi movement in the Thirties and was later absorbed into the ideology of the DMK. In Sri Lanka it became part of Tamil cultural nationalism. Washbrook's observation on the Justice Party is illuminating:

The South was supposed to be the scene of a great Brahman/Non Brahman drama but, between the early 1920s and 1937, this was taking place off-stage. The Non-Brahman Justice Party in office had dismantled its ideology and had shown itself very willing to support any Brahman who would support it. By 1930 it was seriously considering offering membership to Brahmans. The British, who had played a large part in engineering caste animosity, had lost interest in the controversy.<sup>70</sup>

Although caste, religion and language served at a particular juncture to mobilize loyalties and furnish a sense of identification they are not the real bases for politics and power. For nationalism along with modernization is simultaneously the cause and effect of old communities dying and new communities being born. In this process loyalties and priorities too frequently fluctuate and change. Class interests overtake caste interests though sometimes both can coexist and overlap. Language bonds are not free from political manipulation.<sup>71</sup>

The middle class which spearheaded the literary renaissance did not wish to be contained within puristic boundaries. The claims and boasts of the

purists doubtless have a sense of pride and self satisfaction to some sections of the middle class. But such claims were not to be taken seriously for actual practice, for the middle class, while paying lip service to pure-Tamil and such other cultural symbolisms, were set on a cosmopolitan course. Life and literature, percept and practice were neatly separated. Language was also a handy weapon. So when the Anti-Hindi agitation flared up, pure-Tamil enthusiasts like Eelathu Civanantha Atikal and others began to campaign for it. The pure-Tamil movement became a past relic, a hobby horse of the monolingual Tamil teachers in South India and Sri Lanka, who refer to it while bemoaning their plight. The middle class itself prefers to be its own watchdog rather than allow the purists to dictate its correct expression. In Tamilnadu under the guise of fighting against Hindi, English continues to dominate the administration, courts and education. "By putting forward English as the only weapon with which the Hindi offensive can be met, the most conservative and powerful sections in our country cleverly hide the fact that their real object is a refusal to let Tamil grow and a determination to keep English in the place which Tamil, and not Hindi should occupy."<sup>72</sup>

It is an irony of history to note that Vedachalam, who probably spoke and wrote more about the development of Tamil and its potentialities, should have eventually argued for the retention of English as the common language of India.<sup>73</sup> Using all his skills he made a case for preferring English. With that the pure-Tamil movement not only lost its momentum but also its very *raison d'être*.

The writers and communicators of the new generation, have categorically rejected the restraints of purism.<sup>74</sup> Yet we must concede a formative importance to the prose of Vedachalam which, taken in conjunction with that of some of those whom he influenced was to modify today's language.

## NOTES

1. Hardgrave, Robert L. Jr. *The Dravidian Movement*, Bombay: 1965; Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles:

1969; Barnett, Marguerite Ross, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton, N. J.: 1976; Bhaskaran: R. *Sociology of Politics*, Bombay: 1967; Suntharalingam, R. *Politics and National Awakening in South India 1852---1891*, Tucson, Arizona: 1974; Thambiah, S. J., "The Politics of Language in India and Ceylon" *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. I. Part 3. Cambridge: July 1967. pp. 215 -- 240. Schiffman, Harold, "Language, Linguistics and Politics in Tamilnad" *DRAVLINGPEX*, Vol. 5, No. 2 November 1972.

2. Das Gupta, Jyotirindra, *Language Conflict and National Development*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1970; Prakash, Karat *Language and Nationality Politics in India* Madras: 1973; Brass, Paul R. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge: 1974; Wriggins, Howard, Ceylon: *Dilemmas of a New Nation*, Princeton, N. J.: 1960.
3. Nambi Arooran, K. *The Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905-1944, with special reference to the Works of Maraimalai Atikal*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, (University of London, 1976). Also, Irschick, *Ibid.* pp. 275-310.
- 3a. For a sample of these, see Rajarigam, D, *The History of Tamil Christian Literature*, Bangalore: 1958. pp. 8-11. It is of interest to note that the writings of two other Christian Missionary scholars in the present century influenced the "Dravidian nationalist" historians and linguists: Father Henry Heras (1888–1955) whose work on the Indus scripts favouring a Dravidian origin for them boosted the 'morale' of many an anti-Aryan scholar. Father S. Gnanapragasam of Jaffna, Sri Lanka (1875–1947) wrote, among other things, a *Comparative Etymological Dictionary of Tamil* (incomplete) which argued that Tamil was the basic language. Father Gnanapragasam who knew more than twenty languages was an indefatigable worker and was honoured in Germany with an issue of a stamp. His ideas have influenced later Tamil writers like K. Appadurai, Devaneyan, Ilakkuvanar and M. Kanapathi Pillai.
4. Unfortunately Tamil literary history and scholarship provide ample examples of such attitude. A modern scholar like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (1892-1976), whose researches on many aspects of South Indian culture earned him the well deserved esteem of scholars all over the world, had a predilection for extolling Sanskrit as the mainspring of Tamil literature and philosophy. Cf. *History of South India*, Oxford: 1958. P. 330. Also *Dravidian Literatures* Madras 1949. W. Krishnaswamy Iyer, a Judge of the Madras High Court once remarked that, "Sanskrit is the parent of all Indian literatures including Tamil; for much that is claimed in Tamil as original is indebted to conceptions which are entirely to be found in the field of Sanskrit literature" *Madras Mail* 6, May, 1910 quoted by Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 341. At the other end of the spectrum one sees modern Tamil enthusiasts with scholarly

pretensions like G. Devaneyan, K. Appadurai Pillai, S. Ilakkuvanar and others asserting that Tamil was the first language in the world. Such emotionally charged statements and positions“ can sometimes be quite comical and fallacious in content” for these men are very often not professional linguists and, as propagandizers of a particular position, frequently act on emotion rather than on objective examination of facts” *Vide*, Wexler, Paul N., *Purism and Language* Bloomington, Indiana: 1974. p. 7. Although the author deals primarily with modern Ukrainian and Belorussian Nationalism, his comparative data is instructive; for a critique of Brahminism, Nair, B. N. *The Dynamic Brahmin*, Bombay: 1959.

5. *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*. 2nd edition, revised, London: 1875 pp. 45–51. On the question of the British Government’s role or connivance in creating ethnic, caste and racial appeals, see, for instance, David Washbrook: “...the evidence of the Census and of the writings of missionaries and early anthropologists provides some foundation for a generalization on the ‘official mind’. The features of caste most commonly emphasized in European literature of the time were the permanency of ritual position and the subjection of lower to higher castes — features which were derived to a considerable extent from the Hindu scriptures and from the vocabulary of local status confrontation”. D. Washbrook, “The Development of Caste Organization in South India 1880–1925 in *South India* by Baker and Washbrook, 1975, pp. 180–181.
6. For biographical details, see *Professor P. Sundaram Pillai Commemoration Volume* (ed.) Pillay, K. K. Madras: 1957; Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. *Tamil cudar manikal* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Madras: 1959.
7. For a detailed study of Tamil invocatory poems, see Kailasapathy, K. *Adiyum Mudiyum*, Madras: 1970. pp. 64–119.
8. It may be recalled that during the DMK rule, the Tamilnadu government had declared this poem as “national” anthem. Even before that it was sung before commencing Tamil literary meetings.
9. Says Xavier S. Thani Nayagam: The burden of these lines has been a recurrent theme during the last sixty years and has not been superseded even now as the main undertone of patriotic Tamil writing, “Regional Nationalism in Twentieth Century Tamil Literature”, *Tamil Culture*, Vol. X No. 1. 1963. p. 3. More than thirty five poets have written similar poems on Tamil since Sundaram Pillai. For a representative collection of these poems see T. Swaminatha Velautham Pillai, (ed.) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, *Moliyarasi*, Madras: 1971.

10. *Some Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature*, Madras: 1895.
11. Balasubramaniam, K.M. *The Life of J.M. Nallaswami Pillai*, Annamalainagar: 1965. pp. 61–63. Nallaswami Pillai was closely associated with the founding of the Saiva Siddhanta Samajam in 1905 and was for many years its senior adviser and organizer. After a few years of association, Vedachalam kept away from the activities of the Samajam. It is likely that in Vedachalam’s view Nallaswami Pillai was too moderate.
12. Kailasapathy, K. *Pandai Tamilar Valvum Valipatum*, Madras: 1966 pp. 120-126. Vanamamalai, N. *Tamilar Varalarum Panpatum*. Madras: 1966 pp. 42-62.
13. *Adiyum Mudiyum*, p. 108.
14. It is an indication of the English-educated, middle class oriented nature of the revivalist movement that Caldwell’s seminal work — *Comparative Grammar* — remained untranslated into Tamil till 1959. And yet it was the most invoked work in language polemics in Tamil during the last few decades. Isolated passages from his works were often cited as quotations — often out of their contexts — by Tamil scholars to buttress the arguments about the antiquity, purity, independence and self-sufficiency of their language *vis-a-vis* Sanskrit and Hindi. For the translation of Caldwell’s work see *Tiravida molikalin Oppilakkanam* translated by K. Govindan and T. Singaravelu, Madras: 1959; the continued use of English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges was also a reason for the delay in the translation. For a balanced view on these matters written in Tamil *vide* Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. *Tiravida molikalil Araychi*, Madras: 1956. It is only recently with the development of Linguistics as a discipline in Universities in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka that Caldwell has been objectively evaluated.
15. *Suryanarayana Sastri Centenary Volume* (ed.) N. Subramaniyan, Madras: 1970. See Kailasapathy, K. “*Paritimalkalaiganar— marumatipitu*” in the volume.
16. Sastri tried to introduce the English sonnet in Tamil by publishing *Tanipacurat tokai* Madras: 1901. G. U. Pope translated some of them into English and wrote an Introduction too, Sastri also wrote a treatise on Dramaturgy called *Natakaviyal* Madras: 1901.
17. It is interesting to note that a few years later Vedachalam gave an almost identical testimonial to T.V. Kaliyanasundaranar who was applying for a teaching post at Wesley College, Madras. *Vide*, *Valkkai kurippukal* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Madras: 1969. p. 164.
18. C.W. Tamotaram Pillai (1832-1901) from Jaffna, Sri Lanka was, in many ways, one of the most remarkable scholars of the last century. He was the first graduate of the Madras University, passing the B.A. degree examination

in 1858. He later qualified and practiced law and retired as a High Court Judge in 1890. A key figure in Tamil Renaissance, he critically edited and published several literary and grammatical classics. An outstanding intellectual, he was instrumental in creating a love for Tamil among the educated people of his days. "Without doubt he was the one who was first engaged in the rediscovery of the earliest classical literature... Perseverance and modesty were the two most characteristic features of this man, whose greatness and merits have never been acknowledged" Zvelebil, Kamil, *The Smile of Murugan*, Leiden: 1973 p. 269; Vaiyapuri Pillai, S. *Tamil Cutar Manikal*; also see Kailasapathy, K. Foreword to V. Muttucumaraswamy's C. W. *Tamotarampillai* Jaffna: 1971. Tamotaram Pillai was very fond of Sastri (having been one of his examiners), and constantly encouraged him in his pursuits. At the death of Pillai, Sastri wrote a moving elegy: see his *Tamil Pulavar Carithiram* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Madras: 1968, pp. 92–96.

19. Vedachalam's view on Saiva Siddhanta was largely shaped by his mentor and model Somasundara Nayagar (1846-1901) who treated him as his son. At Nayagar's death Vedachalam wrote a long elegy. It was later published, *Comacuntara Kanciyalckam*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Madras: 1941. Another person who probably influenced Vedachalam was Gnaniyar Atikal (1873–1942) who was the Head of the Tirukkovalur *Math*. He was an enlightened person who did much for the revival of Tamil and Saivism. He was associated with the founding of the Saiva Siddhanta Samajam and it was largely due to his suggestion that Pandi Thurai Thevar, Zamindar of Palavanantham founded the Madurai Tamil Sangam in 1901. See Sundaram, V. *Tavattiru Gnaniyar Atikal*, Madras: 1972. pp. 36–43. Vedachalam must have also imbibed his missionary zeal from his Christian teachers at the Wesleyan Mission High School.
20. Pulavar Aracu, *Maraimalaiyatikal* Madras: 1951; M. Tirunavukkaracu, *Marai Maraimalaiyatikal Varalaru*, Madras: 1959. The latter author is one of the sons of Vedachalam. For interesting and revealing reminiscences of the man, see T. V. Kaliyanasundaranar, *Ibid.*, pp. 163–169; also Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, pp. 309-328. But a critical biography and study of Vedachalam is yet to be published. That it is a desideratum need not be emphasized.
21. For the poem and its English translation see Balakrishnan, A. *English Readings of Thiru Arutpa*, Madras: 1966. pp. 22–23. Vedachalam was influenced by Saint Ramalingar's life and works from which he derived his idea of a religious order.
22. Irschick, *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48.

23. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 354, and the details cited in footnotes. Perhaps Vedachalam's most important pamphlet was *Inti potu moliya* (Is Hindi a common language?) serialized in his journal in 1937 and later printed and distributed freely by his disciple from Sri Lanka *Ilattuc Civananta Atikal*.
24. *Ancient and Modern Tamil Poets*, Pallavaram, Madras: 1939. pp. 12-15. The concluding lines of the passage quoted here, reminds one of a similar sentiment expressed by Sundaram Pillai in his preface to Manonmaniyam. Vedachalam probably followed Sundaram Pillai in writing prefaces in English to his Tamil books.
25. Changing of Sanskritic names to "pure" Tamil ones is perhaps one of the most tangible results of Vedachalam's movement. In Sri Lanka too a number of Tamil poets and scholars assumed new and pure Tamil names. e.g. Balasubramanian became Ilamurukapar. Of the others, S. Iraca Aiyandar, Venthanar and Alagasundara Tesikar (1873–1941) may be mentioned. At one stage it became a fad. In subsequent years, such symbolic actions became part of the Tamil nationalist politics in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka. In some cases changing names was also an escape from caste positions, changing those with new names a greater amount of social mobility within the political group. Those who did not formally change their names took on pure-Tamil pen names. On changes in names and designations in Tamil, cf. Franklin C. Southworth "Linguistic Masks for Power: Some Relationships between semantic and social change" *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol. 16. No. 5. Bloomington: May 1974. pp. 177–191.
26. Movement for Linguistic Purism," seminar paper Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, India: Jan. 1977 (mimeographed).
27. Although language conflict and planning is a major problem in developing countries especially where multilingual situations prevail, purism is also present in developed countries like France and Germany. By and large, East European countries appear to have experienced these problems for many years. It is interesting to note that in Sinhala too there is a purist movement initiated by Munidasa Cumaratunga (1887–1944) in the Thirties of this century. He was a scholar in grammar. His movement was called the Hela or Elu movement fighting against Sanskritization. It is said that Sinhala poetry has always preserved Elu and that it is one of its peculiarities. Cumaratunga was a lecturer in Sinhala in Teacher Training Colleges and those who came under his influences carried his messages all over the country. At times the movement betrayed caste loyalties too. Munidasa Cumaratunga was also a writer of some distinction. In recent years the *elu* movement appears to be sagging. On purism in Sinhalese see Sugathapala de Silva, M.W. "Effects of

Purism on the Evolution of the written language: case history of the situation in Sinhalese" *Linguistics*, Vol. 36. p. 5–17. Hague: November 1967;  
 Sugathapala De Silva, M. W. "Some Linguistics, Peculiarities of Sinhalese Poetry" *Linguistics* Vol. 60, pp. 5–26, August 1970. Also, Gair, James W. "Sinhalese Diglossia" *Anthropological Linguistics* Vol. 10, no. 1, Bloomington: Jan. 1968 pp. 1–15.

28. Wexler, *Ibid.*, p. 1.
29. Some perceptive Tamil scholars (e. g. the late Prof. K. Kanapathi Pillai 1903–1968 of the University of Ceylon) who were not too concerned with the 'politics' of purism felt that more than foreign vocabulary, foreign syntactic patterns are influencing and imperceptibly changing the essential characteristic of Tamil language. Kanapathi Pillai was a traditional scholar and a trained linguist. For instance, ever since the translation of the Bible into Tamil, English syntactic and phraseological influences have come into the language. Concerned, as he was, with the intrusion of overtly recognizable 'non-native' elements, Vedachalam does not seem to have discussed this aspect of the problem. (It is also likely that his particular penchant for English might have stood in the way of such an inquiry.) Systematic studies of English syntactic overlay in Tamil formal prose will be immensely rewarding. For parallel data on this problem, see Wexler, *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6 *passim*.
30. *Ancient and Modern Tamil Poets*, p. 3
31. Meenakshisundaram, T. P. *A History of Tamil Literature*, Annamalainagar: 1965. pp. 173–74.
32. For discussion of this situation see *Adiyum Mudiyum*, pp. 102–110.
33. Kailasapathy, K. *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, Oxford; 1968. pp. 229–230.
34. Cf. Fishman, Joshua A. in *Language Problems of Developing Nations* New York: 1968. p. 45.
35. It is generally accepted that Constantius Beschi (1680-1746) was the first European to note the presence of diglossia in Tamil, He Wrote *A Grammar of the Common Dialect of Tamil called koduntamil* Tanjore Saraswathi Mahal series: 1971.
36. G.U. Pope (1820–1907) has endeared himself by his exuberant love for Tamil language and literature and his many translations of Tamil works into English. As Irschick rightly remarks, Pope contributed much "to the elevation of Tamil studies and Tamil religion as legitimate subjects of study for Oriental scholars" *Ibid.*, p. 279. He published many of his translations in *Siddhanta Deepika* and was a source of encouragement to Nallaswami Pillai.

Pope had wide contacts with Tamil scholars in India and Sri Lanka. Also see Balasubramaniam, K.M. *Ibid.*, *passim* on Pope. Vedachalam has made an observation on Pope's translation of *Tiruvacakam*: How strange and uncouth, and even how grotesque in certain places does the literal English translation of the *Tiruvacakam* the great sacred lyric in Tamil, look, even when it is done by so eminent an English and Tamil scholar as Dr. G.U. Pope." *Ancient & Modern Tamil Poets* p. vii.

- 36a. Meenakshisundaram, T.P. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
37. Sivapadasundaram, s. Arumukha Navalar, Jaffna: 1950, p. 9. In recent years there has been an upsurge in the study of Sri Lankan Tamil heritage and as might be expected Navalar has attracted considerable attention. See, Thananjayarajasingham S. *Navalar panikal*, Peradeniya: 1969; Somakanthan, N. "From the role of a religious reformer to a national hero" (in Tamil) *Tamil Sahitya Festival Souvenir* Colombo: 1972. In 1968 on the occasion of the second International Conference-Seminar of Tamil studies held in Madras, the Tamilnadu government honoured great Tamil personages by erecting statues for them. The Tamils in Sri Lanka felt hurt and let down that Navalar was overlooked. Reacting to this alleged blatant indiscretion, an idea to erect a statue for him in Sri Lanka at his birthplace gathered momentum. A Navalar *Sabha* came into being (or was revived) and in 1969 a statue was duly installed in Nallur. It was also planned to establish a library there. The occasion assumed a "national" character. A commemoration Volume was published containing articles in Tamil and English. See K. Kailasapathy "Tradition and Modernity in Navalar" (Tamil) in the volume. Two years later in October 1971 the Government issued a stamp in honour of the National Hero. This episode shows the existence of (minor?) contradictions between South Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil 'national' sentiments. It is a constant irritant to Sri Lankan Tamil enthusiasts that Navalar who had done yeoman services to the revival of Tamil and Saivism should be forgotten by the Tamils in India where Navalar spent a good many years teaching, lecturing and printing books. In another sense Navalar has become, in a different context, part of contemporary Tamil Cultural Nationalism in Sri Lanka. A number of books have been written on him recently. *Vide* Kanapathi Pillai, S. *Navalar*, Jaffna: 1968.
- 37a. It is only in recent years that socio-linguists have begun to investigate the problem of social change and linguistic patterns. For an early essay on this important topic see Ramanujan, A. K., "Language and Social Change: The Tamil Example" *Transition in South Asia— Problems of Modernization* ed., Robert I. Crane, Duke University: 1972. pp. 61-84.

38. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, pp. 343–344. 39.
39. Ferguson, Charles A. in *Language Problems of Developing Nations*, p. 33
40. Ratnam, K. P. “Kalaic Collakkam”, *Proceedings of the II International Conference Seminar of Tamil, III Madras 1968*. pp. 222–236.
- 40a. In fact Rajaji wrote a few articles on elementary chemistry in Tamil. His intention was to demonstrate that scientific subjects could be dealt with in Tamil. These articles were later published, *Thinnai racayanam*, Madras: 1946. In his Foreword to the book he made the following observation: “No one can create barriers for the development of Tamil; it is wrong to do so. But I do not wish to quarrel over the matter. Authors should be free to choose their mode and style. The best will survive.” As is well known, Rajaji was a prolific writer in Tamil and among his valuable contributions are translations from Socrates and the *Meditations* of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Rajaji’s prose is simple, conversational and homely but incisive and to the point. For Rajaji’s views, *The Art of Translation— A Symposium*, New Delhi: 1962.
- 40b. One such conference was held in 1936 at Pachayappa College, Madras. Swami Vipulananda (1892-1947) from Sri Lanka presided over the conference and ably guided the proceedings. The Swami, previously called S. Mylvaganam, was a science graduate of the London University and a pandit of the Madurai Tamil Sangam— the first to qualify at the Academy from Sri Lanka. He was the first Professor of Tamil at Annamalai and Ceylon Universities. As a Swami of the Ramakrishna Mission he was universal in his outlook and knew Sanskrit (and a few other languages) very well. However he leaned towards pure-Tamil unobtrusively. He took part in the coining of terminology and made significant contributions. See for instance his long essay “Vignana Deepam” (The light of science) where he uses numerous terms he had coined. Unlike some of the aggressive artless purists, Vipulananda had a poet’s sense of feeling for euphonic words and a scientist’s concern for precision and brevity. He was also a gifted translator from English to Tamil. He did sections of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Browning and others into Tamil which are of a very high order. Vipulananda’s students later became officials in the Government Language planning agencies in Sri Lanka and adopted their teacher’s preference for pure-Tamil but without his broad vision and subtlety. Vedachalam visited Sri Lanka three times — in 1914, 1917 and 1921— and during his sojourns Mylvaganam had met him. It is likely that his interest in pure-Tamil was kindled by these meetings.
41. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 339 and the references given therein.

42. Cf. Ferguson, *Ibid.*, p. 28
43. Cintanaik katturcikal 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Madras: 1925. p. 23
44. *Vatacol Tamil Akaravaricai*, Madras: 1937; *Vatacol Tamil Akaravaricai Curukkam* Madras: 1938.
45. Insofar as the preparation of glossaries for technical terms in the various branches of academic and administrative establishments are concerned, the Tamils in Sri Lanka have done more and better work. Because the medium of instruction in most of the educational institutions is in national languages, the compilation of dictionaries, glossaries and translation of basic text books and other reading material was a dire necessity. This urgency was never felt in Tamilnadu where, by and large, education still continues to be in English. At the same time most of the work done by private persons and Government Agencies unmistakably show the firm hand of purists at work. The literary (not creative) elite who were bureaucratically chosen to man these posts had, as a result of their preoccupation with such matters over a period of time, preconceived notions about their tasks and apparent expertise. Once given responsibilities they set about to create a vocabulary and a prose style that was consistent with the genius of Tamil language. Beginning with Dr. V. Ponniah who was a sort of a polymath, a number of people connected with 'official languages' work — K.P. Ratnam, A.W. Mylvaganam, E. Rathinam, M. Kanapathi Pillai were of the puristic school. It is only in very recent years, especially after bitter experiences and telling feedback and protests, a gradual relaxation of "fundamental principles" is becoming evident. See Ratnam, K.P., *Ibid.*, p. 227. For interesting — almost identical — parallels in the Hindi scene, Das Gupta, Jyotirindra, *Ibid.*, pp. 177–180.
46. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 341
47. Ferguson, *Ibid.*, p. 32; also Fishman, Joshua A. "Language Modernization and planning in comparison with other types of national modernization and planning." *Language in Society* Vol. 2. No. 1. April 1973. pp. 25-26.
48. Usually the forced alliterations, pompous phrases, shallow witticisms, silly blunders, pure-Tamil patterns and recurrent hyperboles of these pandits cause the laughter. The present writer himself has played the role of such a character in a play by *Ilangaiyarkon* (C. Sivagnanasundaram 1915–1961) an outstanding short story writer and a talented playwright.
49. Zvelebil, *Ibid.*, p. 281
50. For an elaboration of this idea, see Kailasapathy, K, *Tamil Naval Ilakkiyam*, Madras: 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1977. Chapter 2
51. *Ibid.*, Chapter 4

52. *Kumutavalli Nakanattaraci*, Pallavaram, Madras: 1911. English preface, p. ii
53. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 346
54. Cf. Harrison, Selig S. *The Most Dangerous Decades*, Columbia University: 1957. p. 19
55. Sundararajan, P. G. & Sivapathasundaram, S. *Tamil Naval*, Madras: 1977. pp. 69-72
56. *Smile of Murugan*, p. 285. Zvelebil seems to have had a different opinion of the poet a few years ago. Vide, *Introducing Tamil Literature*, Madras: 1968. p. 23, wherein he says, "Bharathidasan was one of the greatest — or perhaps the greatest — modern Tamil poets after Bharathi."
57. Aiyar went to England to study law but became involved in radical patriotic activities and escaped to Pondicherry which was then a haven for Indian patriots. He was a confidant of V.D. Savarkar, a friend of Aurobindo, and a dear companion of Subramania Bharathi. His essay "Poetry" (1918) was the precursor. to later critical works, that flourished in the late Twenties and Thirties. In politics Aiyar was a militant Hindu.
58. *Smile of Murugan*, p. 292
- 58a. Something should be said about a few other journals. After *Manikkodi* ceased publication, a number of little magazines, each in its own way tried to continue the literary endeavour of *Manikkodi*: *Kalamohini*, *Chandrodayam*, *Suravali*, *Teni* and *Kirama ooliyan* in Tamilnadu and *Eelakesari*, *Bharathi* and *Marumalarcci* in Sri Lanka served as avenues for the ever increasing literary output. All of them were short lived. However, one magazine established itself successfully and is still in business: *Kalaimagal* was started in 1932 by R.S. Narayanaswami Iyer who ran the Madras Law Journal Press and from the beginning it established respectability and reliability. It no doubt had a strong Brahmin bias and thrived on caste loyalty. But it also catered for the new literary consciousness. In its early years scholars and cultural personalities like K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, T.A. Gopinatha Rao, U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, R. Raghava Iyengar, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, P.N. Appuswami, P. Sri Acharya, T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, Swami Vipulananda and others wrote in it. It also carried translations of Bengali, Hindi and Marathi fiction. But gradually its character changed. After the end of *Manikkodi*, a number of writers had their short stories published in *Kalaimagal*. It was never really inclined towards experimentations and on the whole is conservative. But it played its role in the consolidation of modern creative literature.

59. See his powerful essay “Etu Tamil? (which is Tamil?) in *Inraya Tamil Ilakkiyam*, Madras: 1965. pp. 172-182.
60. Tamilil Ilakkiya Vimarcanam, Madras: 1974. He is the ‘historian’ of the movement, nostalgically hanging on to the past.
61. Vaiyapuri Pillai (1891–1956) had an abiding interest in creative literature and occasionally dabbled in it. He has to his credit a few poems in translation, a couple of short stories and a novel *Raji*. His essays dealing with modern Tamil literature are collected in *Tamilin marumalarci*, Madras: 1947. He was a good friend of the poet-scholar, Desigavinayagam Pillai (1876–1954) and wrote a few appreciative essays about his works which are collected in *Kavimani Desigavinayagam Pillai*, Nagarkoil: 1967. He worked closely with K.A. Nilakanta Sastri.
62. For representative collections of his literary and cultural essays see *Itaya Oli*, Madras: 1958 and *Arputa rasam*, Madras: 1964. He is said to have coined the word *panpatu* as an equivalent for the English term culture. It has virtually supplanted the earlier word *kalacaram*: For a brief critical evaluation of T.K.C. as he was known, see K. Kailasapathy. *Ilakkiyamum Tiranaivum* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Madras: 1976. pp. 43–48. 121–123 *passim*.
63. I have discussed this point in a historical perspective in Tamil Studies in *Sri Lanka Newsletter of the SSIS*, Vol. 10, No. 3. November 1977. Also in a seminar paper for the International Writing Program, the University of Iowa, October 1977, “Tradition and Change— A glimpse of Modern Tamil Literature”
64. *The Most Dangerous Decades*, p. 12. In Sri Lanka the late Fifties and early Sixties saw a sharp struggle between the ‘progressive’ writers and the Tamil literary establishment over the use of dialectalism and neologisms. Some purist members of the establishment had called the language used by certain writers, *ilicinar valakku*, the usage of vulgar (low caste) people. The matter had sociopolitical undertones. For a quick glimpse of contemporary Tamil writing in Sri Lanka see Kailasapathy, K. *Tamil Naval Ilakkiyam*, Chapter 6; Sivathamby, K. *Tamil Cirukataiyin torramum Valarcium*, Madras: 1967. pp. 143–152; Sivakumaran, K. S. *Tamil Writing in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: 1974; And Sundararajan & Sivapathasundaram, *Ibid.*, pp. 261–272.
65. *Smile of Murugan*, p. 287.
66. Nambi Arooran, *Ibid.*, p. 346.
67. Das Gupta *Ibid.* p. 184.
68. Wexler, *Ibid.* p. 13.

69. Some contradictions in the personal life of Vedachalam have always troubled his friends and admirers. In contrast to his insistence on Tamils using their language in all walks of life, he maintained his diaries in English. Tirunavukkarasu, *Maraimalaiyatikal Varalaru* p. 153. Likewise he also corresponded with many in English. T.V. Kaliyanasundaranar refers to such matters in his autobiography *Valkkaik Kurippukal*, p. 168.
70. Baker, C.J. and Washbrook, D.A, *South India*, Bombay: 1975. p.16.
71. Cf. Harrison, Selig S. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
72. Kumaramangalam, Mohan S. *India's Language Crisis*, Madras: 1965. p. 71.
73. Besides Vedachalam, a person like S. Somasundara Bharathi (1879–1959) a lawyer who turned to Tamil studies (like many others of that era— S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, K. Subramania Pillai) flourished in the self respect atmosphere. He even occupied the chair of Tamil at Annamalai University. A fanatical purist he later campaigned against the imposition of Hindi but eventually argued for the retention of English. Likewise M.S. Purnalingam Pillai (1866–1947) who was a colleague of Suryanarayana Sastri at Madras Christian College and wrote *Tamil Literature*, (1929) the first history of Tamil literature, favoured the use English. In contrast T.V. Kaliyanasundaranar consistently pleaded for the use of Tamil in education and administration.
74. A feature that became noticeable during the last fifteen years or so is the lavish use of English — words, phrases and sometimes whole sentences — in prose and poetry by some Tamil writers. They either use English alphabets or transliterate the words. This is most prominent in what is called the avant-gardist writings that are published in little magazines. This trend started with the “New Poets” who emerged around 1958–59 and spread to fiction writers too. Among the novelists Indira Parthasarathy, Jeyakanthan, N. Parthasarathy, Sujatha, Ambai and a few others are noted for this. C.S. Chellappah, V. Swaminathan, K.N. Subramaniam and N. Jegannathan intersperse English in their critical essays. Some of these writers have created characters that are bilingual and at times conversing in English. Naturally the readers’ knowledge of that language is taken for granted. This phenomenon is not seen in the writings of the earlier generations (1930s and 1940s) who too in their days claimed to be “experimental” writers. I do not mean the use of technical words but simple sentences like “Don’t be silly”. Indra Parthasarathy’s play *Malai*, ‘Rain’ is virtually in both Tamil and English. Some observers have attributed this excessive use of English to alienation of the writers, a reaction to linguistic prescription, a growing sense of ‘internationalism’ in literature and a process of intellectualization of Tamil

literature. It is also true that such writers are mostly from cities. On some aspects of the "New Poetry" see *Smile of Murugan* pp. 313--335. As to the problem of alienation of the writers and the impact of modernization vide, *Tamil Naval Ilakkiyam*, pp. 135-156. Also Shanmugam Pillai, M. "Code Switching in a Tamil Novel" in *Structural Approaches to South India*, ed. Harry M. Buck & Glenn E. Yocum, Pennsylvania: 1974 pp. 81-95 wherein he analyzes the phenomenon of code-switching found in a novel by Jeyakanthan. Shanmugam Pillai thinks that because the novelist writes about middle-class people and some of the subjects dealt with in the novel are taboo, English helps to keep the distance and facilitates discussion. On the question of using regional dialects in fiction, Shanmugam Pillai, M. "Merger of literary and colloquial Tamil" *Anthropological Linguistics*, Bloomington: April 1965. The lavish use of English seems to be a feature in contemporary Hindi Literature too, especially in poetry. This became marked at the end of 1950s. I am indebted to Dr. Karine Schomer (Berkeley) for this information.

*[This article, originally published in the Sri Lanka Journal of South Asian Studies, vol. 1, no. 2, August 1979, is reproduced here with the kind permission of Mrs Saroam Kailaspathy, in the context of recently renewed efforts in South India to glorify the Tamil purist movement from a narrow nationalist perspective.]*

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## **Oppose the Reactionary Protests against Women's Right to Temple Entry**

The Front for Women's Liberation Thought (FWLT) in its statement of 6<sup>th</sup> October opposing the planned demonstration in Colombo protesting against the ruling of the Supreme Court of India granting women the right to enter the Sabarimalai Aiyappan Temple in Kerala, India that the Indian Supreme Court ruling is a commendable and welcome decision.

Reading out the verdict, Chief Justice Dipak Mirsa said that women belonging to a religion should not be prevented from entering a temple of that faith and that women are equal to men and should be respected.

But in Sri Lanka, the country that produced the first woman prime minister and recently made 25% female representation mandatory in elections to local bodies, a male chauvinist Hindutva organization calling itself the Sabarimalai Guruswami Union has announced a demonstration in Colombo in opposition to the above verdict.

The statement added that such announcements denying women's right to worship by claiming that menstruation is unclean insult all women comprising more than half of the population of the society. The FWLT condemned such struggles in these days when women have scored victories to advance at all levels, and called on the people of Sri Lanka not to be party to such reactionary campaigns, and warned that the Hindutva dream of a Greater India is a threat to the entire people of Sri Lanka.

The FELT appealed to all democratic, feminist and progressive political forces to urge respect the right of worship of women as fellow human beings and to oppose discrimination against them based on argument that menstruation is unclean, rejecting the fact that it is a natural process.

The statement also called upon the people to identify and reject anti-human religious fanatical forces.

## **Press Release**

*15<sup>th</sup> August 2018*

### **Illicit Fishing in Sea off Mullaitheevu Coast**

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party made the following statement on behalf of the Politburo of the Party regarding the illicit fishing by fishers from other districts who indulge in prohibited practices for fishing in the sea adjoining the coast of Mullaitheevu.

Fishers from districts outside Mullaitheevu who have set up a large number of fishing huts and stay on to fish in the sea adjoining the coast of Mullaitheevu. They also adopt fishing methods that are illegal and indulge in land encroachment activities. The fisher folk of Mullaitheevu have accused senior officials of the government and members of the armed forces of aiding and abetting in the above intrusive illegal fishing practices.

In view of this undesirable situation, they launched a continuous mass protest during the past ten days. Unwilling to tolerate the protest campaign, elements with a chauvinist background resorted to an orgy of arson attacking eight fishing huts, three fishing boats and twenty seven fishing nets belonging to local fishermen in the Nayar region.

Such a cruel act of arson cannot be justified under any condition. The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party while strongly condemning the arson attacks fully endorses the just demands of the fishers of Mullaitheevu and their mass struggle.

The President and the Prime Minister have often visited the region and pledged to grant development and prosperity to the Tamil people. At the same time they wave the green flag for the planned Sinhalese settlements

targeting the Mullaiththeevu district as well as to intrusive arrival of fishers from other districts and illicit fishing practices. This is the two-faced stand of the current “Good Governance” regime. Question arises as to how the Tamil people can recover from the losses of the past when the government practices goodwill in speech and chauvinism in its deeds.

Thus, the mass struggle launched by the fishers of Mullaiththeevu is the only way for them to secure their just demands. The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party fully endorses their struggle and calls upon all progressive and democratic forces to support the struggle.

SK Senthivel  
General Secretary, NDMNLP

## **Public Seminar Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the MDMLP**

A Public Seminar under the theme “People’s Burdens and Political Crises” was held at the Dining Hall of the Urban Council, Vavuniya in the afternoon of 16<sup>th</sup> September 2018 as part of a series of events to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party.

The Seminar was chaired by Comrade N Pradeepan, Vavuniya District secretary of the Party, and was addressed by Comrades SK Senthivel, General Secretary; K Thanikasalam, Politburo member; V Mahendran, National Organizer; K Selvam Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary; S Thevarajah, Politburo member; and David Suren, Hill Country Regional Secretary; and by Comrades S Mohanadharshini of the Front for Women’s Liberation Thought and M Mayuran from the NDMLP, Colombo Region.

Comrade T Sriprakash compèred the programme of events organized under the aegis of the NDMLP, Vavuniya District.

# Call on the Public to Join Awareness Campaigns in Support of Political Prisoners

The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party, Northern Region, responded to the appeal by the parents and relations of political prisoners in the Anuradhapura Prison, with an expression of full support for the awareness campaigns held opposite the Main Bus Station in Jaffna on 21<sup>st</sup> September and in Vavuniya town on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September in solidarity with the political prisoners, who are on hunger strike for over seven days, and demanding that the government should grant them short-term rehabilitation and set them free. The Party also appealed to the public to participate in large numbers in the awareness campaigns.

Comrade Selvam Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the Party and Member of the Valikaamam East Pradeshiya Sabha who issued the statement of appeal and solidarity added:

“The question of release of political prisoners, which is part of the national question and is dragged on without a solution to this day, can only be resolved by unconditional release of detained who have not been subjected to formal inquiry and by release under general amnesty those who have been tried, based on precedents.

“We strongly condemn the failure of the Maithri-Ranil Government, which came to power promising a political solution to the national question and the release of political prisoners, to make efforts to resolve these problems for more than three years since its election, with a view to nourish chauvinistic ideology.”

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# The Chessboard

S Sivasegaram

*(translated by author)*

Rook, Bishop, Knight and Pawn,  
King and Queen<sup>1</sup>  
stand firm in the places preset for them.  
Each makes its every move  
as per rules laid down for each.

It is hard to devise a battlefield  
made of equal squares  
on a somewhat round and curvy earth surface  
of hills and valleys  
with water surrounding the land  
blocking land routes. Thus  
the lines across the gameboard  
could seem slightly crooked.  
Yet, each was drawn  
in keeping with rules made by the players.

Departure of the old and arrival of the new  
occur not by error but in course of time.<sup>2</sup>  
Besides, what we know as custom  
is that of the elite.<sup>3</sup> Hence,  
the lines on tomorrow's game boards,  
the rules of tomorrow's game, and  
even tomorrow's players could change.

Yet  
despite differing orientation and reach  
Rook, Bishop, Knight and Pawn,

King and Queen  
know not that  
their every move is constrained.  
Hence each  
considering to be its own  
what has been laid down for it  
undertakes tasks mindless of outcome;  
All take pride in destroying the foe,  
extol the merits of their deeds, and  
eulogize their decease as death of honour.

Though the game could end  
any moment the players choose, and  
the whole chessboard could fully overturn  
when the players resolve not to play,  
all that are placed and moved on the game board —  
Rook, Bishop, Knight and Pawn  
and King and Queen —  
stay put in their places  
even in refashioned form.

Every time the game is played,  
each  
mindless of the thought  
that its moves are not voluntary  
makes its every move on the game board  
as per rules made by another.

<sup>1</sup> Elephantry, chariotry, cavalry, infantry, king and minister, in early Indian tradition. The camel replaces the chariot in Mogul tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Lines from *Nannuul* a work of Tamil grammar

<sup>3</sup> Line from *Tholkaapiyam* the oldest extant work of Tamil grammar

*(continued from inside front cover)*

Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Only socialism is true freedom.

No more enemies, no more frontiers  
The borders are red flags  
Oh socialists, to the rescue  
Red flag will triumph.

Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Only in socialism is there peace and freedom.

Bold, conscious and proud ranks  
Unfurl the red flag in the sun  
Workers to the rescue  
Red flag will triumph.

Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Red flag will be triumphant  
Long live communism and freedom!

Written in 1908, *Bandiera Rossa* (Italian for "Red Flag"), also called *Avanti Popolo* after its opening words is one of the most famous songs of the Italian labour movement. It glorifies the Red Flag, symbol of the socialist and communist movement.

**Palestinian Loss of Land 1946 to 2000**

**Palestinian & Jewish Land 1946**



**UN Partition Plan 1947**



**1949 - 1967**



**2000**



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