Malay Minority of Sri Lanka: Defending Their Identity

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(Summary)

- Swarn Vajracharya

The Malays count only 0.32 percent of Sri Lanka’s total population. They have made Sri Lanka their home since their ancestors had arrived from areas presently known as Malaysia and Indonesia in an extended period from 300 to 600 years ago. Of the three recorded arrivals, the earliest group arrived during the reign of King Parakramabahu and followed by the political exiles brought by the Dutch and the soldiers brought by the British from the same region.

Having served different masters: the Sinhala kings, the Dutch and the British, the Malays settled down in coastal towns including Slave Island in Colombo and Kirinda, another coastal town in southern Sri Lanka. While three fourth of Malays live in Colombo, they form a 95% of the local population in Kirinda. They are generally known as hard working people. The majority of city dwellers are educated and multi-lingual, competitive in business. They represent in both public and private sectors in addition to the armed services and Police. But they have no voice in the national Parliament, the highest body of the decision makers for the country and its citizens.

Malays did represent in the first Cabinet of Independent Sri Lanka and national Parliament. Prominent Muslim (Malay) leader Dr. T. B. Jayah, was first to have served in the first Cabinet led by Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake in 1948 and followed by several other Malay leaders as either appointed or elected members of the Parliament till 1960. But in retrospect, the appointment or the election system did not secure a continued representation of the Malay community in the Parliament.

Several organizations have raised the above issue asking the government to pay worthy attention to the dire need. One such organization was the Conference of Sri Lankan Malays (COSLAM) led by Mr. T. K. Azoor, a young lawyer and a member of Colombo Municipal Council. His movement, which has formed a loose federation with a number of small scale and scattered Malay organizations all over Sri Lanka, urged the Government in May last year to make constitutional provision to elect or appoint a Malay to Parliament and the Provincial Councils and to create a system that will address the plight of Malay community. Except a small number of individuals, the entire Malay community, are deprived of their legitimate rights: right to employment, right to abode, right to free education and right to stand as a distinct ethnic group.

スリランカのマレー系コミュニティ：アイデンティティをめぐって

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（要約）

スリランカにおけるマレー系民族の人口は、全体の0.32％にすぎない。彼らの祖先は300年から600年頃の時代にかけて現在のマレーシアやインドネシアから渡来し、それ以来この地に住んでいる。スリランカ上陸が記録されている3つの集団の中、最も早いものは前述の地よりバラクラマバル王の時代に渡来し、次にオランダによる植民者、英国人によって役人として連れてこられた集団の順となっている。

マレー系の人口はシンハラの下、オランダと英国という数々の支配者に支え、コロンボ、キリンドの奴隷島を含む海岸の町や南スリランカの他の海岸の町に定住した。4分の3のマレー系住民がコロンボに住む一方で、彼らはキリンドでは95％の人口を占めていた。彼らは一般的に勤勉だと言われていた。都会に住む大半の人々は高い教育水準で複数の言語を話し、商売において競争が激しかった。またマレー系の人々は軍隊や警察に加えて公共、民間部門のポストを占めていた。しかし彼らは国家と国民の最高意思決定機関である国民議会では発言の場を与えられていなかった。

マレー系住民は独立後の最初の内閣と国民議会への代表を送っていた。著名なイスラーム教徒（マレー系）の指導者T.B.ジャヤ博士が1948年のD.S.セナナヤケ氏率いる第一次内閣に参加したのもはじめ、1960年まで数人のマレー系指導者が投票または指名によって後を続いた。しかし裏返ってみると、この指名及び選挙制度は国民議会でのマレー系住民の立場を安定させるものではなかった。

幾つかの団体がその問題を取り上げ、政府に配慮を求めた。そのうちと言われる弁護士でありコロンボ市議会議員だったT.K.アズール氏率いるマレー系スリランカ人会議（Conference of Sri Lankan Malays [COSLAM]）であった。彼の運動はスリランカ中で注目される小規模のマレー人組織の繋い合を形作り、昨年5月にマレー系住民を国民議会と地方議会に立候補または指名を可能にする憲法の条文を作るよう政府に働きかけ、マレー系コミュニティの窮状を訴えた。数人の個人を除いて、マレー系コミュニティ全体が正当な権利：雇用、居住、教育や民族団結を代表するという権利を奪われている。
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We might stand up for our community, but it cannot be said that we have stood against the interest of the country as a whole. I have always said, and I repeat it today, that I consider the interest of the country as a whole, to be paramount.

(Dr. T. B. Jayah\(^1\), 1937)

1. Introduction

The Malays\(^2\) of Sri Lanka would have been a long forgotten minority, had they not maintained their mother tongue, the Malay at least in a colloquial form. The Malay community is a distinct ethnic group. They are Muslim by religion. The present population of Sri Lankan Malays counts only a 5% of the Muslim population, which is also an 8% of the whole population\(^3\) of Sri Lanka. Except for slight changes in numbers, the percentage of the Malay population remained unchanged. While the present number of Malay population stands at 60,000 persons, one third of them live in Colombo, others are scattered out in several districts of Sri Lanka. Among them, the largest number is 1% of the population of Hambantota district in the southern Sri Lanka.

Despite its small size in number, the Malays have maintained their language, and culture distinct from other communities such as Sinhala, Tamil and Moors of Sri Lanka. They have also contributed joining hands with other communities towards the nation building of a united Sri Lanka. One time they had represented in the National Council, Parliament including in the first cabinet of Independent Sri Lanka and engaged in wider range of professions including Public and Educational service, in the armed forces, judiciary, medical and engineering etc. However, as a community, the Malays have not achieved much progress due to several factors including the indifferent policies of the past governments towards their plight and dilemma.

Although a three fourth of a century has passed since Edward Reimers, a renowned archivist first shed lights on Malay community in Sri Lanka, only a handful of papers were written on the subject until some of serious scholarly research papers of Dr. Hussainmiah were published in 1987 by the Institute of Malay Language, Literature and Culture (IBKKM) of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Then his doctoral thesis ‘Orang Rejimen, the Malays of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment’ published in 1990 by the same university in Malaysia, turned out to be a prime source for study and research on Malays in Sri Lanka.

The purpose of this paper is to study about the Malays of Sri Lanka, their history and how they formed a distinct ethnic group in Sri Lanka. It will examine their share of contribution towards the nation building of Sri Lanka and their present plight and dilemma how to preserve their distinct identity in parallel with their religious identity as Muslims in a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka. The Malays assert they are Muslim by religious identity. But they are a distinct ethnic community with their own language and culture different from others. Less has been written about this socio-political aspect of the Malay community that has focused on their distinct identity. Hence, this is an attempt to fill that long due gap at least in some way.

To complete this paper, I have mainly depended on interviews with many Malay gentlemen of different socio-political calibre and informants at the fieldwork on my several visits to Slave Island in Colombo, Galle, Matara, Kirinda, Hambantota in Sri Lanka. Several reference materials at the Public Library in Colombo and borrowed materials from several Sinhala and Malay scholars and friends in Sri Lanka were indispensable for the purpose.

2. The Background: The Arrivals of Malays in Sri Lanka

The Malays of today’s Sri Lanka are said to be the ‘descendants of the 17th century Malay Kings, Princes and Nobles exiled from Java by the Dutch and of the Malay soldiers brought in by the British in the 18th century from the region including Malay Peninsula\(^4\), then known as Suvarnabhumī\(^5\). However, the origin of the Malay community of Sri Lanka goes far beyond the 17th century A.D. It is impossible to say the exact date of the original arrival of the Malays to Sri Lanka. But references in Chulawamsa about an invasion by a Malay King named Chandrabhanu make it probable that the Malays had contacts with Sri Lanka earlier than the Dutch period. According to Edward Reimers, there are also references to the Malays in other historical works of the Sinhalese of the 13th and 14th centuries A.D. that King

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1) Dr. T.B. Jayah was the first Malay Member in the first Cabinet of Independent Sri Lanka.
2) Malays of Sri Lanka have come from various parts of the Malay world that extended from present Malaysia to Indonesian Archipelago.
3) The Total Population estimated in 2002 is 19,576,783 persons.
Parakramabahu, the Great’s Admiral and captains were Malays and King Rajasingha I is said to have had Malays in his service. This may suggest that there were Malays before they were brought or arrived during the Dutch and the British colonial rules in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the arrivals of the Malays can be categorised into three periods. What are they?

The Early Period (1247-1640 A.D.):

The earliest arrival of the Malays we have known took place in the middle of the 13th century A.D. with the invasion of Chandrabhanu, the Buddhist King of Nakhon Si Tammarat in the Isthmus of Kra of Malay Peninsula. *Culawansa*, a chronicle of Sri Lanka has recorded the incident:

When the eleventh year of the reign of this King Parakramabahu II had arrived, a king of the *Javaka* known by the name of Chandrabhanu landed with a terrible Javaka army under the treacherous pretext that they were followers of the Buddhists. All these wicked *Javaka* soldiers who invaded every landing-place and who with their poisoned arrows, like (sic) to terrible snakes, without ceasing harassed the people whenever they caught sight of, laid waste, raging their fury, all Lanka. (*Culawansa* LXXXIII, 36-51).

The term *Javaka* used in the chronicle is a well-established name for the Malays of the Peninsula6. Chandrabhanu attacked the Sinhala kingdom twice and failed both times. In the second attack, he himself got killed. But Chandrabhanu had succeeded taking over the northern part of Sri Lanka and become the ruler of the Javanese Kingdom7 in Javapatama (present Jaffna). This Javaka King of Sri Lanka who is mentioned in the inscriptions of the South Indian Pandyan King, Jatavarman Vira Pandyan (A.D.1235-1275) has been identified as Chandrabhanu (Sirisena 1977, 14).

The *Yalpanam Vaipava Malai*, the chronicle of Jaffna mentioned of two local names such as Chavakaccheri8 (Javacakcheri-Java settlement) Chavakotu or Ja Kotuwa (Javaka Fort) confirming the Java/Malay connection with Jaffna. It is presumable that these *Javakas* may have moved towards the Kandyan kingdom at a later part of the history and worked for the King of Kandy, who is said to have a garrison of army consisted of the Malays. There is a well-known story that a Malay captain named Nouradeen and his brother were beheaded at the order of the King of Kandy because the brothers declined the royal offer to head the Malays in the service of the king but chose to remain loyal to their British master, the King of the Great Britain.

Besides these *Javakas* who arrived in Sri Lanka as Chandrabhanu’s army or servicemen during the reign of King Parakramabahu II, there were seafarer freight careers, and the merchants ventured in ambitious maritime pursuits around Madagascar. They often called round the coastline of Sri Lanka, which suggests that many of them may have settled in areas near the harbours such as Hambantota and around the coastline. According to one of my Malay informants at Kirinda Malay settlement9, Hambantota was named after Sampans, the seafarers from the Indonesian archipelago, who called to the natural harbour in the past. These seafarers, and the freight careers of the East, after their conversion to Islam at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. relinquished their ambitious maritime pursuits in favour of their co-religionists, the Arabs. The visits of Malays became lesser and ceased visiting Sri Lankan waters at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. when Arabs and Mohammadians established themselves in the seaports of Sri Lanka and gradually took over the entire trade of the Island into their hands. (Edward Reimers, 1924)

The Dutch period (1640-1796 A.D.):

The second arrival of the Malays in Sri Lanka took place during the Dutch administration, which ruled the coastal area of Sri Lanka for a period of more than one hundred and fifty years. Having driven away the Portuguese, who were ruling the coastal area of Sri Lanka, the Dutch established the full control of the coastal area in 1640. They brought hundreds of Malays from all over in Malay Peninsula and Indonesian islands. Those who were brought to Sri Lanka consisted of two categories. One being the political exiles from Indonesia including other deportees expelled by the Batavia10 government and second group consisted of all other classes of Malays who were brought to serve the Dutch government in Sri Lanka. This second group included those recruits for the Military and other services, too.

Among the first category, it also included princely exiles from various parts of the Indonesian islands and the Malay Peninsula. The Batavia government banished the Javanese including the nobles and many other eastern kings, princes as well as the chiefs and the dignitaries of the region for rebelling against the Batavia rule. In 1709, Susus Mangkurat Mas, the King of Java, was exiled to this country by the Dutch with his entire family and

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6) King Parakramabahu II ruled from 1236 to 1270 A.D.
9) Local Tamil people living in this area seem to know little about this history when I asked them during my last visit to Jaffna in January 2002.
10) Kirinda Malay settlement has the biggest Malay population: 95% are Malays.
11) The Dutch name for the Government in Java and other East Islands after Batavia, the old name of the Netherlands.
followers. This was followed in 1723 by 44 Javanese Princes and Noblemen, who surrendered to the Dutch at the Battle of Batavia, were exiled to Sri Lanka. All these lived in the four main coastal towns under the jurisdiction of the Dutch, namely Colombo, Galle, Trincomalee, and Jaffna (Hussainma, 1990, 40). Others including the slaves were confined to quarters on the Slave Island surrounded by Bere Lake in the center of Colombo. The majority of people living in the area even today are the Malays. The Dutch is said to have stocked the lake around the island with crocodiles, preventing the slaves’ escape. Those who escaped were flogged and branded for a first offense, hanged for a second.

The Dutch government also established a first settlement for the Malays, who served them, in an area close to the Slave Island. A Dutch report dated 25th June 1681 indicates that a piece of land 13 Morgen (about 28 acres) in extent was granted to the Javanese Malays situated at Wolvendahl. There were 196 houses and had coconut and jack trees planted.

It is not known the exact number of exiles brought to Sri Lanka during the Dutch period. But by the end of 18th century A.D., it appears that at least 200 members of eastern nobility were resident in the island. With their families, the number of Malay people amounted close to 2000 people.

The British Period (1796-1948 A.D.):

It was the British who brought the third category of Malays to Sri Lanka. Many came from the Malay Peninsula and became the permanent source of providing military manpower and to serve the British in the island. The British drove the Dutch away and took control of the coastal area in 1796. Frederic North, the first British Governor of Sri Lanka, at first, did not like the idea of incorporating the Malays, the soldiers who fought against the British during the Dutch rule over Sri Lanka and had become prisoners of war after the Dutch fell to the British, into his military. But he agreed to take the 300 Malay soldiers under custody of the British when the Dutch surrendered. The Dutch had stipulated that the Malays should be sent back to Java Island at the cost of the British, who in turn first sent them to Chennai, India and later incorporated into the British military in Sri Lanka. This was the starting point that recruited hundreds of Malays into the British military service, thereafter.

Governor North was also the first British Administrator, who initiated reforms in the military and formed Malay Corps raising their salaries resembling to those of the native Corps. As a result, these Malay Corps were admitted into the King’s service on 23 April 1801 forming a Malay Regiment for the first time outside Malay Peninsula. The Malays became the first Asians to hold commissions from the British Sovereign. By this time, the strength of the Malay Corps amounted to 1200 soldiers.

During North’s time, he established several Malay colonies in Sri Lanka starting from Mahagampatta region, in the southern part of Sri Lanka. The first one was opened in Hambantota, which is now a major Malay invalid settlement in the south. Later, two other settlements were established in the villages of Kirinda and Palatupana. The settlers were assigned to different kinds of work including in the salt pans found in the region and farming and fishing etc. The region at the time was a jungle and not even a coolie from other community wanted to work in the area. Having seen the Malays were enduring the hard life, Governor North was pleased with the Malays and wrote that “they were hard workers and courageous and not easily terrified with little dangers and inconveniences” (Hussainma 1990, 63) in one of his dispatches to the Home Government.

Thereafter, Governor North decided to recruit Malays to enlarge his forces. His recruitments largely came from Malay Peninsula as he set up recruiting agency for the first time in Penang (Prince of Wales Island) around 1800. He also tried to bring Malays from other British colonies like, Cochin in India, Island of St. Helena etc. But larger number came from Malay Peninsula with their families to settle in Sri Lanka to serve the British military. The Malays were periodically brought to Sri Lanka until the recruitment was halted in 1803 after the British lost to the Kandyan kingdom in the war against Kandyan Kingdom on 24th June 1803. The defeat was largely attributed to the desertion of Malay soldiers who formed the main strength of the British garrison.

The desertion of ‘British Malays’ had occurred mainly because of the ‘Kandy Malays’ who were in the Kandyan King’s service and offered security and protection to the Malay soldiers in the British side. 700 Malays deserted to the Kandyan side leaving only 250 Malay soldiers behind. Governor North was so furious that he immediately ordered the halt of recruiting the Malays. But he later changed his mind and resumed taking the Malays into the service. He changed his mind in consideration of the loyalty of Captain Naurdeen who led the Malays in the British force and the assurance and “invariable attachment” shown by the Malay exiles living in Sri Lanka to the British government. He then rebuilt the Malay Regiment, which was left with only 600 soldiers by recruiting more from the Malay Peninsula and other east islands. North continued his effort to strengthen the Regiment until his

departure from Sri Lanka at the end of 1805.

3. Formation of Malay Community in Sri Lanka

The Malay community of Sri Lanka is formed of a number of people arrived in Sri Lanka at different periods of time, on different reasons and from a diverse region of eastern islands that included Malay Peninsula, Java and other Indonesian islands. They are popularly known as “Jaminissa” among the Sinhalese community and “Jamanusar” among the Tamil community meaning “People from Java” in both languages. The term “Java” we found in the Cualawamsa also has a similar meaning: “Person from Java” (Java=ka) (Java+person) while the Malays call them “Melaysu” in Malay language. How did they form the Malay community?

There are several factors that helped form the Malay community of Sri Lanka. Firstly, the formation of a separate regiment for Malays in the British military played an important role towards the formation of the Malay community. By the time of Governor North’s departure from Sri Lanka, he had laid a foundation for a future Malay community of Sri Lankan style. During his tenure of 10 years as Governor, he persuaded 75% of the Malays that included exiles of various class and people come from different islands in the East living in Sri Lanka to join the British military service. During his administration, North recruited Malays from all over including locals and those from the Malay Peninsula. He set up a separate military regiment for Malay soldiers, formed a Boy’s company to give prior training to the children of the Malay soldiers and formed an Invalid Regiment to help them find alternative jobs. North set up Malay settlements and provided jobs. He even looked after the children and wives of those soldiers who died in the battle. The Malay regiment played a central role in promoting welfare for the Malay soldiers and communicating with other Malays and settlements in cities and villages in the island. On top of that, the Malay Military mosque, primarily set up to serve the spiritual needs of the soldiers, also attracted the Malays living around the area. The mosque served as a center promoting friendship among the Malays came from different places of origin.

Secondly, the Malays themselves played a formidable role in maintaining their language and customs. Although they came from same region of the East islands, they spoke variety of dialects spoken in Malay and Java islands. During the time of the Dutch rule over Batavia, the people living in the area had developed a separate dialect called “Batavia dialect” which is a form of simple spoken Malay. As the majority of people came from this area to Dutch Ceylan\(^13\), it is possible that they retained the “Batavia dialect” and got mixed with local languages in Sri Lanka. This was only natural because of their long absence from their native land. Further, there was no proper learning and teaching of standard Malay language in Sri Lanka neither in the past nor even at present. This may have contributed to the creation of a Sri Lankan styled “Malay” language. In fact, Malay and Sinhala languages share a common root of Sanskrit language. The Malay language, like Sinhala has a strong influence from Sanskrit language as Java, Sumatra had Buddhist and Hindu empires in the past. A close look at some examples below give us a better picture of the fact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Sinhala</th>
<th>Malay(^13)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agama</td>
<td>agama</td>
<td>agama/igama</td>
<td>- religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhasha</td>
<td>bhasawa</td>
<td>bahasa</td>
<td>- language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhumi</td>
<td>bhumi</td>
<td>bhumi</td>
<td>- earth</td>
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<td>Devi</td>
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<td>- goddess</td>
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<td>Dosa</td>
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<td>- sin</td>
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<td>Graha</td>
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<td>graha</td>
<td>- eclipse</td>
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<td>Guna</td>
<td>guna</td>
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<td>- use/benefit</td>
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<td>Guru</td>
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<td>- teacher</td>
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<td>Jeeva</td>
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<td>- life</td>
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<td>Labha</td>
<td>laba</td>
<td>laba</td>
<td>- profit</td>
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<td>manusiya</td>
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<td>- human being</td>
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<td>megha</td>
<td>megha</td>
<td>- cloud</td>
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<td>Puja</td>
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<td>Pustaka</td>
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<td>pustaka</td>
<td>- book</td>
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<td>pustakalaya</td>
<td>pustakalaya</td>
<td>- library</td>
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<td>Sadhu</td>
<td>saadu</td>
<td>saadu</td>
<td>- priest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Savari</td>
<td>sawari</td>
<td>sawari</td>
<td>- tour/journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senaphi</td>
<td>Senaphi</td>
<td>Senaphy</td>
<td>- army commander</td>
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<td>Sisya</td>
<td>sisya</td>
<td>siswa</td>
<td>- student/pupil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundari</td>
<td>sundari</td>
<td>sundari</td>
<td>- pleasant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^13\) Dutch name for Sri Lanka
\(^14\) Quoted Malay words and their meanings from an article by M. Farook Thaliph, “Malays – their enriched culture and endemic customs” (04 Sep. 2002)
Swarga swarga swarga - paradise/heaven
Wanita wanita wanita - lady/woman
Warna warna warna - colour
Warta warta warta - report
Wangsa wangsa wangsa/bangsa - race/tribe
Dharmawangsa Dharmawansa Dharmawansa - religious tribe
Jayawangsa Jayawansa Bangsajayah - victorious tribe
Sinhawangsa Sinhawansa Sinhawangsa - lion tribe
Weerawangsa Weerawansa Weerawangsa - warrior tribe

Above are some of many Malay words that have derived from Sanskrit words and similar to Sinhala language, which shows that not all words are corrupted in today’s Malay language as some suggest as the language has become corrupted and left to a mere creole language. The Malays have not lost their attachment to their linguistic identity nor to their ethnic identity of “Malays”. The Malays of Sri Lanka have developed their own distinct features to an extent that Tunku Abdul Rahman, a former Prime Minister of Malaysia commented on the Sri Lankan Malays in the following:

The only difference is that their features have changed. They look more like Indians (the Kelings) than Malays and their language is strongly influenced by the Indian dialect. What’s more they have lost touch with adat and custom, but still they call themselves Malays...

But these (Malay) soldiers who went there without their womenfolk married into the families of the Indian Muslims. These Muslims were known as the Moors and after generations of intermarriages, it is hard to pick one from the other, Malays or the Moors, except when they announce their racial identity... (Rahman 1983, 195) 15

However, there is no argument about the fact that the Malay language accorded stronger support in forming the Malay community of its own outside Malay Peninsula and Indonesian archipelago.

Thirdly, the religion of Islam was another force behind the formation of a Sri Lankan Malay community. Islam played a constructive role to keep them distinct from other religions. However, the Islam that Malays had embraced was not the orthodox Islam of Arabia. When the Arabs introduced Islam into South India and Indonesian islands, ‘they merely wanted the new religion to be accepted by the people’. 16 And the Malays who were brought especially during the Dutch period to Sri Lanka were not all Muslims.

It is not known exactly since when the Malays of Sri Lanka got converted into Islam, though their homeland folks had done so at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. The Malays, who had arrived or lived in Sri Lanka after Chandrabhanu’s invasion till the Dutch invasion, have been Buddhists, Hindus or mixture of both in the present terminology of Buddhists and Hindus. It is difficult to establish the religious background of these Malays because they were formed from various groups that included Amboneese; Balinese and Javanese because among the Amboneese, there was a considerable number of Christians, and Balinese belonged to Hindu or Buddhist religions. Some Javanese had become Christians and were receiving benefits from the Batavia government (Hussainnia, 1990, 53). Therefore, the Malays who came to Sri Lanka before and during the Dutch administration are not known whether all of them were Muslims. An extract from the Dutch minutes by Council of 8th September 1660 shows that there were Christians among those who came to Sri Lanka:

“Whereas the Javanese soldiers 28 in number have now for some time past offered themselves to be instructed in the Christian doctrine, have made public profession thereof, accepted Holy Baptism, and have solemnly married according to Christian rites; also seeing that they have procreated children and, further have elected to dwell in this land and to serve the Honourable company most respectfully and obediently; so has the Superintendent proposed (and they with the greatest delight accepted), to select a place within the watches of this City, a fertile spot, in order to settle them there with their families, and to found there a village according to the limits and ordinances that shall be appointed for them; further they shall cultivate rice according to their natural skill, but nevertheless, that they shall always continue in the military service, wherefore a general increase is hereby granted them and their wages have accordingly been raised as follows: to a sergeant, 8 Spanish reals, to a Corporal 5 1/2 , and to a Private 3 1/2 Spanish reals monthly.” (E. Reimer’s Translation)

15) Quoted from Hussainnia, (1990, 18)

There is also no historical record, which indicates that all the Malays had adopted an Ambedkar style of mass-conversion to become Muslims nor there was any Malay ethnic leader like Ambedkar of India, who got converted to Buddhism with millions of his followers of the Achut (untouchable) cast. Malays’ conversion to Islam may have been a gradual and centuries long process. It is recorded that the Malays (of the Malay Peninsula) converted into Islam at the beginning of the 16th century A.D. and ceased visiting to Sri Lanka as Arabs and Mohammadians had established themselves in the seaports of Sri Lanka and ‘had gradually taken over the entire trade of the Island into their hands. The Malays were the freight careers of the East, but after their conversion to Islam, they relinquished ambitious maritime pursuits in favour of their co-religionists, the Arabs contenting themselves with ventures nearer home, for which the numerous islands of the Archipelago and the extensive coastlines of the Peninsula and Java and Sumatra afforded them ample scope’ (E. Reimers).

This suggests that the majority of Malays of Sri Lanka may have converted into Islam after they came to Sri Lanka and through their Moor relatives. Although there is no mention about any mosques erected during the Dutch period, the British Administration in Sri Lanka built several separate places of worship for their soldiers. They built Sri Siva Subramaniavm Swami Kovil for the Indian Hindu soldiers and the Military Mosque and Akbar Mosque for the Malay soldiers. What role did the Malay mosques play?

The Malay mosques catered the spiritual needs of the regiment and boosted the socio-religious cohesion of the community. The first Malay mosque was built during the British rule at Welikanda in Slave Island at the request of the Malay soldiers, as they wanted to have their mosque erected closer to where they live. Otherwise, they were in disadvantage in attending the Moor mosque, where sermons were held in Tamil and Arabic, not in their mother tongue, Malay. There are several mosque built in Galle, Trincomalee, Kalpitiya, Badulla, Kirinde, Kurunegala and Kandy to cater the spiritual needs of the Malay military personnel as well as the ordinary Malays, who worked on their own or worked for the British as gardeners and servants.

The mosques played very important role in the formation of a Malay community serving them with their social and cultural needs in addition to the religious service. This helped build an ethnic and cultural identity for the Malays. ‘The mosques were not only the places of collective worship, but also center of community administration, where important discussions were held by members of the community and decisions taken on behalf of respective congregations. Every Muslim settlement of some size had such a mosque which was its only public building and object of great pride.’ (Hussainnia, 1990, 126-127). The mosques are also the centers of learning, where the Malay children are taught Arabic language and recital of holy Koran.

Thus the Malays arrived in Sri Lanka at different periods of time, on different reasons and from a diverse region of Eastern islands that included Malay Peninsula, Java and other Indonesian islands formed a community of their own: the Malay community with the support of British founded Malay Regiment, the Mosques erected for their sake and their own undying efforts of maintaining their lingual and ethnic identity as the Sri Lankan Malays.

4. The Malay Contribution towards Sri Lanka

The Malay community, despite being one of the smallest communities in Sri Lanka, has contributed towards the nation building of Sri Lanka as an equal partner in the multi-ethnic mosaic of the island nation. ‘They were not only daunting soldiers in time of war, but erudite scholars dedicated to their religion, cultural pursuits and contributed commensurably to all walks of Sri Lankan life.’ Muslim leaders fought shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts, the Sinhala and the Tamil freedom fighters for the independence of Sri Lanka.

Among Muslim leaders, Dr. T. B. Jayah was one of the most prominent and illustrious national leaders of Sri Lanka. He was an educationist and a political visionary. Being a Malay Muslim, he strove for freedom of all communities. He is known as a leader who put his country before community. It was his thesis that became a corner stone of the present governance as ‘One Nation – One Country’ in which he originated a united democratic concept of a Unitary State. Originally as a teacher, he taught at several well-known schools such as Ananda College18, Prince of Wales and as the Principal of Zahira College, he transformed a tottering elementary school to a premier educational institution in Sri Lanka. As a politician, he was deeply concerned about the welfare of the Muslims including his own Malay community as well as other communities. He was first elected to the Legislative Council in 1924 and appointed Minister of Labour and Social Service in 1947 in the first Cabinet of Independent Sri Lanka under Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake. He also served as the first High Commissioner (Ambassador) of Sri Lanka in Pakistan in 1950. He won praises from S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike19, then leader of the House in the State Council for a three hour long speech he made in 1944 in support of the Dominion Bill that paved the way for full

18) “Colleges” in Sri Lanka are equal to senior high schools in Japan
19) Father of president Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumararatunga
independence for Sri Lanka.

Dr. Jayah was also very much concerned about the education. He believed that equal educational qualification would eradicate the gap among the different ethnic groups. He emphasized that:

“The supreme need of the hour is education, not merely elementary education, not merely half-hearted education, but an education that will turn out heroes and heroines, leaders and reformers, thinkers and philosophers, an education that will make us a progressive enlightened and powerful minority.”

The formation of prominent societies of today’s Muslim and Malay elites attributes to Dr. Jayah’s initiatives that promoted education among the Muslim population, which included the Moors, the Malays, and the Meluhans etc.

As indicated earlier, the Malays were primarily the soldiers, the policemen, and the fire brigades. They have a long history of service in the armed forces of Dutch Ceylon, British Ceylon and today in the multi-ethnic Sri Lanka. A police day is marked on March 21st every year to commemorate Police heroes, is the day on which a Malay PC named Sabhan laid down his life in 1864 becoming the first Police officer to die in action. Although the number is small, the Malays continue to serve in the Armed and Police. Quite a number have made their sacrifice in the ethnic war with the Tamil separatists.

The Malays are also known to be impressive in their contribution to national sports in Sri Lanka. The history of Cricket in Sri Lanka records that the Colombo Malay Cricket Club founded in 1872 was the first cricket club in the island. The club has produced outstanding cricketers some of whom have represented Sri Lanka. They have also donned the Sri Lankan jersey in football and rugger. Some of them have even become captains of the national team and coached in swimming etc. The Malay sportsmen and sports women are also known excelling at other sports including Judo, Karate, Athletics and Netball bringing fame to Sri Lanka. The Malays aspire to contribute to the nation building of Sri Lanka by undertaking their share of duty while defending their legitimate rights. What rights to defend?

5. Defending a Distinct Ethnic Identity

The Malays of Sri Lanka are compelled to defend their legitimate rights: a simple right to be heard. They have made Sri Lanka their home though they had originated from the islands of the East. They have lived here more than 300 years first as exiles, then as settlers and now as legitimate citizens of Sri Lanka. All the Malays except aliens or wayfarers, living in Sri Lanka are those who were born in this island. They live side by side with communities belonging to Moor, Tamil, Sinhala and Burghers as well. They fought shoulder to shoulder for freedom, made their sacrifice to safeguard the country they were born whenever they were required to do so.

The Malays in Sri Lanka are generally hard working people. The majority of city dwellers are educated and multi-lingual, competitive in business. They represent in the Public and Education Services, in the armed services and Police, in the field of law, medicine, science and technology, engineering and now in Information Technology and Computer Science. They also hold high posts in private companies. But they have no voice in the national Parliament, the highest body of the decision makers for the country and its citizens. These circumstances have deprived the Malays from the opportunity of participating in the decision making process.

It was not that they had never been represented in the National Councils. There were several Malays elected or nominated MPs including Dr. T. B. Jayah, Dr. M. P. Eraham, and Mr. B. Zahire Lye till 1960 and Mr. M. S. Usman, and Mr. M. E. H. Mahareef in the Republican Parliament till 1994. But in retrospect, the appointment, the election or the nomination system did not secure a continued representation of the Malay community in the Parliament.

In the most cases, members from minority communities like the Malay could not win elections except in special cases. Dr. Jayah who was first appointed to the Legislative Council

20) Pertumuan Melayu, the Souvenir published marking the Malay Rally on 26-27 Jan 2002.
in 1924 as the third Muslim Member and who was an energetic and dynamic leader would espouse the cause of the Muslims, when the occasion demanded. But he lost the State Council elections he contested in June 1931 and again in the State Council held in February 1936. But this time he was appointed a nominated member of the State Council.

It was in 1947; Dr. Jayah got elected to the Parliament when he won the first Ceylon Parliamentary election. He was elected the 2nd member of the three-member electorate. He was then appointed Minister of Labour and Social services in the First Cabinet of Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake. He served the ministry and as an MP till he was offered Sri Lanka’s ambassadorial post in Pakistan by the Prime Minister. Dr. Jayah was again made an appointed MP in the short-lived Parliament of March to July 1960 on his return to the island from Pakistan. Not many Malays were lucky to be appointed or elected to the Legislative or Parliament of Sri Lanka after him. However, the Soulbury Constitution had a provision allowing the Prime Minister to choose six members to the House of Representatives. He chose all these members from the minority communities who could not otherwise get them elected to Parliament. This led to a tradition that the Prime Ministers appoint a Malay member to Parliament afterwards. As a result Dr. M. P. Drahman and Mr. B. Zahiere Lye were appointed MPs. The tradition of appointing Malay members did not continue that long, when Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake, who succeeded his father after his death in 1952, did not appoint any Malay MPs to Parliament.

After a long gap of more than 25 years, two Malays were accommodated in the National lists of two major political parties: one was Mr. M. S. Ossman in the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) National list and other was Mr. M. H. Amit in the National list of United National Party (UNP). Mr. Amit was appointed an MP and served until he resigned to make way for Mr. Gamini Dissanayake to reenter Parliament. At the same period, Mr. M. E. H. Mahroof was elected to Parliament from the Trincomalee District and served as the Deputy Minister of Port and Shipping during the latter part of his tenure. Since 1993, there has been no Malay member in Parliament. In the General Election held in October 2000, there were two Malay members in the National lists of two major political parties. Mr. T. B. Abbas was in the UNP National list, while Mr. T. K. Azoor in the National list of the National Unity Alliance (NUA). But both failed to get appointed MPs. In the General Election called in after a year, none of the major political parties had Malay names in their lists of candidates or in the National list.

22) Centre leaning party formed of ‘Sinhala Mahasabha’ of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who became the Prime Minister in 1956.
23) First Political Party formed by D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of Independent Sri Lanka.

Although these two gentlemen failed to secure seats in Parliament either through nomination or election, they later contested local elections and proved worthy to be nominated by the political parties. Mr. Ossman was elected in the Sri Lanka Muslim Party (SLMC) ticket from the Colombo District to the Western Provincial Council in the Provincial Election held in 1988. He resigned from the Party after a year. His place was then given to another Malay Mr. M. A. Ameer an ex-Sri Lankan footballer who served until 1993. In the case of Mr. T. K. Azoor, a leading lawyer in Colombo and dynamic leader of Malay community joined the SLMC in which he was elevated to a Deputy leader won the Colombo Municipal Council election held in 1997. He polled the second highest number of votes in his list and got himself elected to the Council. There are several other Malays who have been successful in winning local elections. They are also worthy of mention: Mr. Shiraz Sheriff, the Vice Chairman of the Nawalapitiya UC, Mr. Hilaly Abdeen, a member of Kandy Municipal Council and Mr. Allon Deen a member of Hambantota UC. These limited Malay positions in a few Municipal and in Provincial Councils have yet to serve as a cowl to force their voice heard in the national level. But it is not an easy task to make their voice heard, for the Malays cannot elect a leader of their choice because there is no electorate, which has a Malay majority. The only way out is to create a system that elect or appoint members of minority: a Malay member to represent the Malay minority community.

Several organisations have raised the above issue asking the government to pay worthy attention to the dire need. One such organization was the Conference of Sri Lankan Malays (COSLAM) led by Mr. T. K. Azoor, an untiring activist for the Malay cause. His movement urged at a special session held on 4th May this year the Government to make constitutional provision to elect or appoint a Malay to Parliament as well as each to the Provincial Councils and its Successors of the Western, Central and Southern Provinces (see the Appendix 1). The Malays urge the government to create a system that will address the plight of Malay community. What are their rights?

The first is that the entire Malay community, except those individuals, who have their own wealth, power or extra ordinary talents, are deprived of their legitimate rights: right to employment, right to abode and right to free education as equal as to other communities of Sri Lanka. The majority of Malays, who were employed in the armed forces, Police and the fire brigade in the past, have been displaced by individuals from other communities. While several housing projects were launched to provide houses for the houseless, the Malays were

26) She was a daughter of the King of Kelaniva, who cast her adrift to sea as a sacrifice for royal indiscretion. She is said to have washed up on the shore at Kiriunda and was taken as queen by King Kawanila. They later became the parents of the great King Dutugemunu, who united the onetime divided Sri Lanka into a united under one crown for the first time.
left out. And in the case of free education, too, the Malays had no other choice but to choose either Tamil or Sinhala as their medium of instruction in schools since the English stream education was abolished in 1962. And this language policy of the govern- ment even divided the Malays into two language streams: one those speaking Sinhala and other speaking Tamil. Generally Malays are known to be multi-lingual and are in advantageous position than those of mono-linguals in finding employments. But in reality, the number of multi-lingual Malays is lesser than one would expect in the settle- ments farer from Colombo. An example can be drawn from two Malay settlements in Sri Lanka one being Slave Island and other being Kirinda, both places, where I happened to meet a number of Malay people.

Kirinda, a historical seaside community where Queen-to-be Viharamahadevi is said to have come ashore after her perilous drifting voyage from Kelaniya, is now a larg- est Malay settlement in Sri Lanka, which is located in Hambantota district in the south, about 170 miles away from Sri Lanka’s capital city Colombo. Out of 300 families living in this village, the Malay comprised 95%. Malay is the main language spoken in households, shops and in the market- places. The 75% of the Malay population are fishermen and the rest are farmers. In

3. Mr. T.K. Azoor, the president of Conference of Sri Lankan Malays (COSLAM)

4. A family gathering at the residence of Mr. Hamin, a vice president of Conference of Sri Lankan Malays (COSLAM)

5. From left Dr. B.A. Hussainmiah, the writer and Mr. T.K. Azoor sharing Malay food at a social gathering in a Malay residence in Colombo.

the fish market, my informant told me that even non-Malays speak Malay when they negotiate with the Malay fishermen. Kirinda also is in advantage of having a Muslim High School, that has classes from Grade six to twelve known as General Certificate of Education-Advanced Level (G.C.E A/L), where the majority of the students are Malay children from the settlement. They consist more than 95% of the student population. The majority of teachers including the headmaster and his deputy are Malay. They speak to their students in Malay outside the class. But I was told to my surprise that the medium of instruction in the school is Tamil.

The language factor is another plight of the Malay grievances. Almost all Malay children either study in Sinhala or Tamil medium as there is no choice since the English medium has been abolished. There has been no educational policy to allow the Malay students to study a language of their choice let alone receiving instruction in Malay, whereas there are schools, which teach their students foreign languages like German, French or Japanese it addition to English. Several children, whom I interviewed, study either in Tamil or Sinhala medium. An interesting story was that children at Lankaasaba School in Colombo teach students Tamil in Sinhala. In another encounter with a Malay settlement, which is known as Kirula Road Malay Gardens in Colombo, there are about twenty Malay families. The children spoke fluent Sinhala and a couple of twin sisters answered me promptly when I asked their name in my broken Tamil. But the great grandfather, a retired policeman was worried about the Malay language as children will be burdened to learn several languages: Sinhala, Tamil and English leaving their mother tongue behind. Next settlement I visited was the Slave Island, the first foremost Malay settlement in Sri Lanka. The main street is named as Malay Street along with which there are government offices and private companies, where onetime in the past was Kampong Kertel, the major Malay settlement in Colombo. The Malays living on the Java Lane that directs to the present Malay Military mosque were worried about the language being used inside the mosque. The Imam inside the very Malay mosque is no longer come from a Malay family like in the past. The priest I met when I visited this mosque was from Eastern province of Sri Lanka and was from the Moor community. He spoke no Malay but fluent Arabic, which he teaches the children and Tamil his mother tongue. My interpreter spoke to the priest in Tamil. Naturally, the mosque goers preferred the priest at the mosque speak Malay. One gentleman I spoke to was the only adult male figure of a family of three generation. He is married to a grand daughter of the lady, who was 72 year old and owns the house. His worry
was also about the sermons in Malay language in the Malay military mosque. He said only once a month they are provided with a sermon in Malay language. The Malay parents of young adults are worried of their children not being interested in learning the Malay but have turned to English stream.

The last but not least plight of the Malays of Sri Lanka is their religious identity. They are Muslim by religion not by ethnicity, they assert. But they are treated as Muslims not as Malays. This is what they emphasize in defending their identity. As indicated in the preceding pages that not all the Malays were Muslims nor they were always Muslims in the past. By the time the Malays were brought to Sri Lanka during the middle of the 17th century by the Dutch, there were large Muslim settlements in the coastal areas of Sri Lanka. They were the settlements of the Moors or those who had come from South India from the 6th century A.D. The large number of Malays particularly soldiers came to the island without their womenfolk, many were still young and single. They took women from Java were the followers of the Shafi School of Muslim religion while the majority of Indian Muslims belonged to the same school. This must have had a stronger impact over the Malays to take Moor wives and to get converted into Muslim, had they been not Muslim before their marriage. They also adopted Tamil as their lingua franca to communicate with the Indian Muslims or the Moors. Almost all Malays I interviewed in Colombo, Matara, Kirinda and Hambantota spoke Tamil in addition to Malay and Sinhala languages.

The Muslim identity of the Malays is something they are proud of. Many I met were gradually accepting the orthodox Islamic teachings. Yet what was interesting was their zeal to identify themselves as ethnic Malays while being a Muslim. In Malaysia, being a Muslim is a requirement to be accepted as a Malay. No non-Muslims are accepted as Malays. In Bosnia Herzegovina, Muslim is an ethnic identity. But the Malays who are treated similarly stress that their Muslim identity is religious not ethnic. Why do they assert ethnic identity?

The Malays assert their ethnic identity because their culture is distinct. Their language is different from other Muslims.

6. Conclusion

The Malays of Sri Lanka have remained a distinct ethnic group in Sri Lanka primarily because they have maintained their mother tongue, the Malay at least in a colloquial form. Having originated from different regions in the East islands that included Malay Peninsula and Indonesian archipelago, they have formed a Sri Lankan Malay community from a diverse origin.

Despite its small size in number, the Malays had proved that they deserve to be treated as a special class of people, some of whom lived receiving special benefits from the Dutch government, and many as military men getting established special Malay regiment and a separate mosque for the Malay soldiers. Moving from one master to another, the Malays also proved that they deserve care from subsequent masters including the governments of Independent and Republic Sri Lanka.

The Malays made Sri Lanka their home and contributed joining hands with other communities towards the nation building of a united Sri Lanka. They represented in high offices from Legislative Council to National Parliament including in the first cabinet of Independent Sri Lanka and engaged in wider range of professions including Public and Educational service, in the armed forces, judiciary, medical and engineering etc. However, there are several factors that have hampered their progress as a community, for which they
have sought solutions. It is still not clear as to how the present government wants to respond.
Time will tell the story.

The Malays themselves have been active in defending their distinct identity for a secured
future for their community while extending their support to safeguard the country they claim
to be their motherland.

"What counts is not necessarily
the size of the dog in the fight;
it's the size of the fight in the dog."
-Dwight D. Eisenhower

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Appendix - I.
In the Name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful

THE RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED AT THE SPECIAL SESSION HELD ON 4TH MAY 2002 AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AUDITORIUM COLOMBO 7

WHEREAS the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka has entered into Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for the cessation of hostilities, as a first step towards initiating peace talks to find a viable and lasting solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka,

AND WHEREAS the Government has also decided to introduce Constitutional Reforms to enable a wider range of the civil society to participate in the decision making process in Sri Lanka,

AND WHEREAS the Sri Lankan Malays who had enjoyed representation in the legislature since independence have been deprived of such representation after the promulgation of the Republican Constitution of 1972 except for the period from 1989 to 1993,

THIS Special Session of the Conference of Sri Lankan Malays (COSLAM):

1. Commends the signing of the MOU as an opportune and necessary step for the initiation of peace talks aimed at finding a just and equitable solution.
2. Calls on both parties to the MOU to assiduously abide by its provisions both in letter and in spirit with sincerity and candour
3. Calls on both parties to expedite the initiation of peace talks and to approach these talks in a spirit of give and take, with the ultimate objective of arriving at a solution to the ethnic problem whilst ensuring the rights of all ethnic and religious groups in the island within the framework of a united and sovereign Sri Lanka.
4. Urges the Government to make constitutional provision to:
   a. Elect or appoint a Malay to Parliament
   b. Elect or appoint a Malay each to the Provincial Councils and its Successors of the Western, Central and Southern Provinces.

Appendix - II

Table 1. Estimated Percentage Distribution of Population by Ethnicity and Religion, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Groups</th>
<th>Religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>Buddhist 69.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka Tamil</td>
<td>Hindu 15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Tamil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moor</td>
<td>Islam 7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgher/Eurasian</td>
<td>Christian 7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>19,170,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Population by Ethnicity, 1881-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1931(1)</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,759,800</td>
<td>5,306,900</td>
<td>14,846,700</td>
<td>16,825,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low - Country Sinhalese</td>
<td>1,846,600*</td>
<td>2,216,200</td>
<td>10,979,400*</td>
<td>12,437,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandyakan Sinhalese</td>
<td>1,256,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan Tamils</td>
<td>687,200</td>
<td>818,500</td>
<td>1,886,900</td>
<td>3,124,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Tamils</td>
<td></td>
<td>365,300</td>
<td>818,700</td>
<td>873,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan Moors</td>
<td>184,500</td>
<td>289,600</td>
<td>1,046,900</td>
<td>1,249,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Moors</td>
<td></td>
<td>36,300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td>39,400</td>
<td>42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burghers and Eurasians</td>
<td>17,900</td>
<td>32,300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malays</td>
<td>8,900</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>48,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veddhas</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>28,400</td>
<td>52,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>27,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source - Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka
(1) Excludes 442 persons with unspecified sex and race enumerated at the partial Census of 1931.
* Low country Sinhalese and Kandyakan Sinhalese are combined.
# Estimated
### Table 3. Population by ethnicity and district, 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sinhala</th>
<th>Sri Lankan Tamil</th>
<th>Indian Tamil</th>
<th>Moor</th>
<th>Burgher</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>19,846,700</td>
<td>10,979,568</td>
<td>1,886,864</td>
<td>818,656</td>
<td>1,046,927</td>
<td>29,274</td>
<td>46,963</td>
<td>28,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombo</td>
<td>1,699,241</td>
<td>1,218,635</td>
<td>170,590</td>
<td>19,824</td>
<td>139,474</td>
<td>19,688</td>
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Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, 2000

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### Appendix 3

**Languages Spoken in Sri Lanka**

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**Sources:** Ethnologue data from *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 14th Edition*  
SIL International, Dec. 2002