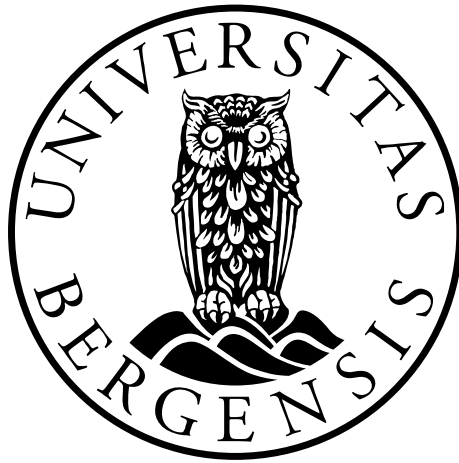


University of Bergen
Department of Social Anthropology



**A Transnational Political Engagement: Solidarity, Nationhood
and Pan-Tamilness among the Tamils of Tamilnadu**

Athithan Jayapalan

2015

Content List:

Abbreviations	5
1. Chapter 1:Introduction	6
- Identity and Political Consciousness among Tamils in Tamilnadu.....	6
- Nationalism and Transnationalism.....	7
- Political Engagement towards Eelam.....	8
- Long Distance Nationalism and Transnational Politics: The Public, Private and Virtual spaces.....	10
- Chennai.....	13
- Methodology: Political Engagement in Scenes and Spaces.....	14
- Conclusion.....	18
2. Chapter 2: Eelam and Tamilakam	20
- Tamil Nationalism in Tamilnadu.....	21
- Sri Lanka and the Backdrop of the Civil War.....	24
- The Last War in Eelam and Transnationalisation of Memory	27
- Tamil Cosmology and Contemporary protest.....	29
- Death, Justice and Self-immolation.....	33
- Martyrdom and the LTTE.....	35
- Conclusion.....	36
3. Chapter 3: The Transnational Characters of the Politics of Eelam	37
- Transnational Interaction.....	38
- The Imagined Community and Strategy.....	40
- Organic Intellectuals and Political Entrepreneurs.....	42
- Discourses and Growth of Shared Conceptions.....	43
- Genocide.....	44
- International Events and Local Dynamics.....	47
- Tamil Transnationalism and Indo-Lanka Relations.....	48

- Conclusion.....	51
4. Chapter 4: Eelam Solidarity Movement.....	52
- Nascent Stages of the Solidarity movement.....	53
- A Series of Critical Events.....	55
- Student ‘uprising’ and the Balachandran Photographs.....	58
- Student Agitation and Loyola Hunger Strike.....	60
- Boycott of National Parties.....	62
- Practicing Tamilness.....	64
- Conclusion.....	66
5. Chapter 5: The Multiple Faces of Tamil Nationalism.....	67
- Political consciousness.....	67
- Tamil Linguistic Nationalism.....	68
- Periyarism.....	70
- Ambedkarism.....	72
- Tamilness and Environment.....	73
- Anti-imperialism.....	75
- Conclusion.....	77
6. Chapter 6: Tamilness.....	78
- Egalitarian Nationalism.....	78
- Tamilness.....	80
- Tamil identity.....	82
- Kumar.....	82
- Marcus.....	83
- Brahmanism and India.....	85
- The Popular Nation.....	88
- Conclusion.....	89
7. Chapter 7: The Remembrance.....	90
- Critical Event.....	90

- The Event: Tamil Ocean and Genocide.....	91
- Ambedkar, Periyar ,Marx and LTTE.....	94
8. Chapter 8: Indian National Media Narratives.....	99
- Free the Tamils: Demonstrations against Death Penalty.....	100
- Indian National Discourse.....	103
- Centre-State Relation.....	104
- The Activists and Indo-Lanka Relations.....	106
- Conclusion.....	108
9. Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	109
- Transnationalism and Nationalist Engagement.....	109
- Identity.....	109
- Student Agitation and Continuity.....	110
- Transnationalism and Globalization.....	111
- Conclusion.....	113
10. Appendix 1.....	114
11. Bibliography.....	115

Abbreviations:

DK - Dravida Kazhagam

DMK - Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

ADMK - Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

VCK - Vidhulai chiruthai Kathcy

INC - Indian National Congress

BJP - Bharata Janata Party

SRM - Self Respect Movement

LTTE - Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam

Chapter 1: Introduction

Identity, Activism and Political consciousness among Tamils in Tamilnadu

In this study I will explore the development of the contemporary student agitations which have unfolded in Tamilnadu, India since 2008 centered on the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils. The study concerns Indian Tamil activists in the city of Chennai and their own understanding of the political engagement towards Tamils of North-East Sri Lanka. It is also a study of the political literacy, identity and actions of the students and through them, the agitation in Tamilnadu. Extensive research on the political history of the Tamil regions of India and Sri Lanka will be elucidated to provide the context which facilitated the contemporary developments in Tamilnadu. The main corpus of field material is collected during my fieldwork carried out from January to June 2014. Furthermore my interests lie in tensions between the identity category of Indian promoted by the Indian nation-state and the permeating ethnic identity category of Tamil in Tamilnadu. The tension is prevalent as the pro-Sri Lankan Tamil agitation highlights Tamilness and scrutinizes Indian-ness, as a result of collaboration between the Indian Central government and the Sri Lankan government. I will also explore the uniting factors which transcend traditional elements of differentiation among Indian Tamils and contribute to the activation of an overarching Tamilness and political identity.

As the theoretical focus will be on forms of transnationalism and nationalism, the introductory portion of the study is dedicated to a thematic introduction and discussion of the agitation. The activism which I study is transnational as well as of nationalist orientation, yet does not adequately fit into either dominant forms of nationalism or long distance nationalism. Transnationalism is discussed as the theoretical vehicle I prefer in conceptualising the political engagement of Indian Tamil youth towards the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils. It will be followed by a discussion on anthropological methods and fieldwork in the study of political engagement in an urban context.

Nationalism and Transnationalism

In the literature on nationalism over the last thirty years nationalism has to a large extent been discussed as either state-centered and hegemonic or ‘banal’ (Gellner 2006, Anderson 1988, Billig 1995), or as peripheral/diasporic and engaged (e.g. Safran 1991, Anderson 1992, Clifford 1994). Furthermore typical literature on nationalism is based on separatist movements or political engagement of the type which orients towards unification of a territory with an existing nation-state. Subsequently nation, statehood and territory conflate in the ideology and literature on nationalism.

Tamil activists in the Southern Indian state of Tamilnadu exhibit nationalist engagements which are to my knowledge not yet treated in Western academia. Their political engagement in Tamilnadu concerns the humanitarian situation, state oppression and the political struggle of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Indian Tamil political engagement is also not oriented towards the creation of a greater Tamil state encompassing both Tamilnadu and the Tamil North-East of Sri Lanka. It is thereby different in nature from e.g. the political engagement of Serbian Serbs concerning Serb inhabited lands in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, intending to establish a Greater Serbia or Turkish Cypriots intending unification with Turkey. Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils identify themselves with two different ‘homelands’, statehood, political identities and modern histories. Amidst these differences they also perceive themselves as ‘ethnic kin’ with shared Tamilness based on language, myths, literature and ancient historical connectedness. As they do not share a common statehood project or homeland they exemplify a peculiar mode of political engagement and sense of collectiveness.

In 1992, Benedict Anderson coined the term ‘long distance nationalism’ to conceptualize political engagement towards the homeland practiced by migrants in Western metropolises. He argued that it is more radical and extremist than the political engagement practiced by ethnic group members who remain in their homeland. He calls this type of engagement “a politics without responsibility or accountability” (Anderson 1992:11). In this thesis I will explore forms of political engagement which challenge dominant categories of nationalism. This is explicated by the durable and sustained engagement of Indian Tamils towards Tamils of Sri Lanka, which challenge 1) notions of Indian nationalism and identity 2) dominant academic literature on nationalism. Western academia has neglected the Tamil phenomena which have been unravelling in Southern India since 2009. Consequently the Indian Tamils’ political engagement anchored on identities centered on Tamilness, Tamil

language, civilizational heritage and transcending national borders and prevalent markers of differentiation such as caste, class and religion is neglected by dominant academia. I will also explore processes of identity politics and transnational interaction among Tamil speaking communities as a result of political engagement towards Sri Lankan Tamils. Indian Tamils' active participation in what has hitherto been conceptualized as diasporic 'home-land' politics of Sri Lankan Tamils (Fuglerud 1999) is in itself peculiar as both have traditionally been viewed as two distinct but related nations.

Anderson's analytical concept of 'long-distance nationalism' falls short of explaining the transnational interaction involved in the politics of Eelam (Sri Lanka) due to its grounding on the dichotomy between outsiders/expats and those who remain in the homeland. Indian Tamils are not true 'outsiders', but are simultaneously not considered 'insiders' by Sri Lankan Tamils. Neither do Indian Tamils popularly consider themselves as belonging to the same polity as Sri Lankan Tamils nor are they migrants living in a foreign country. They are identified as two different national polities by the intelligentsia on both sides, despite emphasis on shared Tamilness by Tamil nationalist in Tamilnadu. Their respective 'homelands' are not the same, and Indian Tamils identify Southern India i.e. *Tamilnadu/Tamilakam* as their homeland while Sri Lankan Tamils identify North-East Sri Lanka known as *Eelam*, as their traditional homeland.

Nation is an 'imagined political community', as Benedict Anderson put it, since the individuals involved in a nation will not personally be acquainted with most of their fellow members but on a level of consciousness they conceive themselves as all belonging to the same commune (Anderson 1991:6). In an increasingly globalizing world, as information technology and mass communication disseminates, develops and trickles down, the manner and mode of integration within and between linguistically or culturally 'related' nations have transformed significantly over the recent past. This transnational dimension will be articulated through the analytical and empirical material presented in the thesis.

Political engagement towards Eelam

Since my project deals with two related yet distinct nations, it is necessary to differentiate them. I will use the term Eelam Tamils to refer to Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamilnadu Tamils to designate the Tamil speakers in India. The term Eelam is the politically charged self-identification of Tamils of Sri Lanka who engage towards their homeland. The Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka has since the 1950s been referred to as Eelam, while the etymology

can be traced back to antiquity. Eelam is also the emic term used by Indian Tamils involved in the concerned political engagement and is thus viewed as an appropriate etic term for my project. The articulation of politics concerning Eelam Tamils is centered on the terminology and symbolism of *Eelam* (homeland), *Eelam Tamil* (ethno-political identity) and *Eelattu Viduthalai Porattam*(The Liberation struggle of Eelam).

Since 2009 there has been a range of interrelated processes contributing to the revitalization of Tamil nationalism and identity in the south-Indian state of Tamilnadu transcending previously persuasive but parochial identities and politics. Although Tamilnadu was the hotbed for ardent Tamil and Dravidian nationalism in the mid-20th century under leaders such as E.V. Ramasamy (Periyar) and C.N. Annadurai, the entrance into Indian electoral politics and capture of state power by the main Dravidian movement seems to mark the erosion of Dravidian fraternity. Party politics and caste associations became the most pervasive focal point for political mobilization. The last war waged against Eelam Tamils by the Lankan government, resulted in a remarkable mobilization of protest and solidarity under the banner of ‘Tamilness’ in Tamilnadu. The solidarity for Eelam Tamils has brought contradicting and opposing sections of the Tamilnadu polity together in a collective outrage against the Lankan government, the Indian Central-government and the international community. The plight of Eelam Tamils is then to be understood as a uniting factor contributing to the articulation and negotiation of an overarching Tamil political identity in Tamilnadu. Caste associations, political parties, student movements, individuals and civil groups who would previously diverge on grounds of caste, party loyalty, religion, or class, are increasingly seen together in venues where agitation for Eelam manifest. Recent events are proving the significance of this phenomenon. In March 2013 Tamilnadu students spearheaded protest campaigns in several cities across the state ahead of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) meeting in Geneva which was expected to pass a resolution against Sri Lanka. Towards the end of March as the resolution passed was deemed a weak stand by the international community towards the Lankan government, the students intensified their civil disobedience campaign. The public agitations are the first of its scale since the anti-Hindi agitations of 1965 which paralyzed the state and compelled the Indian government to abandon its national project of imposing Hindi as official language (Pandian and Kalaiyarasan 2013). The current student protests have now been embraced by other sections of the Tamilnadu polity, including auto-drivers associations, shop-owner federations, fishermen, worker unions, professionals and politicians involving in strikes to show solidarity with the student activism and Eelam. On 27th March 2013, the Tamilnadu legislative assembly

passed a resolution against Sri Lanka reflecting the demands of the protestors (Hindu 2013a). The demands were mainly to recognize the right to self-determination of Eelam Tamils, to recognize the atrocities of the Sri Lankan state against the former as genocide and to initiate an international investigation. Furthermore during my fieldtrip, the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu passed an election manifesto which called for the Indian government to initiate a U.N. mandated referendum on Eelam to be held among the Eelam Tamils in Sri Lanka and in the diaspora. Such events indicate the influential role the advocacy for Eelam holds in Tamilnadu, both on the streets and in state assembly among political parties and social movements.

Long Distance Nationalism and Transnational Politics: The Public, Private and Virtual Spaces

I have identified three main types of venues or spheres through which Tamils in Chennai engage politically towards Eelam. I have divided them into private, public, and virtual venues. The private venues cover political engagement and interaction between the researcher and the interlocutor in private apartments and offices. The public venue, arguably the most predominant, consists of political engagement as observed in parks, boulevards, Marina beach, on the streets and in public buildings e.g. colleges. The public venue as an analytical tool is drawn from Habermas's (1991) celebrated concept of the public sphere coined to grasp civic activities of the public wherein which people could gather, express and identify social problems and influence political action.

This is of relevance as a majority of the Eelam solidarity movement is manifested in public spheres. This draws media attention and creates public and political discourse which in turn has proven to influence political actions at the state level, as witnessed in the passing of several resolutions in the Tamilnadu legislative assembly by unanimous votes reflecting the demands of the solidarity movement. In a similar vein, in the increasingly globalized context, the dissemination of social media such as Facebook has proven to be an ideal and significant venue for interaction and mobilization. I conceptualize the political engagement and expression as found through the use of Facebook as the virtual venue or sphere for the concerned political action.

These three venues will provide the analytical tools to ground and grasp the concerned political engagement of my interlocutors.

Concerning engagement of various kinds between agents transcending national boundaries and locality, two terms are often used interchangeably in public discourse and by scholars: International and Transnational. There are however important elements which differentiate these two, and it is important to bear this distinction in mind. International is used to denote the phenomena of state to state affairs transcending national boundaries whereas transnational refers to the affairs of non-state actors whose interaction and operation transcend national boundaries when forming their relationship (Portes 2001; Kjeldstadli 2008; Vertovee 2009).

In his article “Mapping Transnational Politics: Past, Present and future” , Tharmalingam points out that previous concepts regarding typologies of transnationalism are anchored on dichotomies between the type of actors (top-down and organization-personal) and the intensity (narrow – broad, core-expanded) of the engagement towards ‘the country of origin’. Thus regarding the context of Tamil diaspora these dichotomies proved to be rigid analytical devices, which if employed, shun the flow and dynamics of transnational political engagement of Tamils, which often tend to blur the lines between for instance narrow and broad transnationalism. Instead, Tharmalingam proposes a broader approach: “... *Tamil transnational politics can be defined as the political motivated actions, relations and practices that focus on the politics of self-determinism of Eelam Tamils and links the Eelam Tamil traditional homeland and other sites where Tamil diaspora members are dispersed*”(Tharmalingam 2011:8). In my study this conceptualization will be slightly altered to incorporate the peculiar category of Indian Tamils and their transnational politics. Their political engagement may be described as politically motivated actions, relations, perceptions and social practices that center mainly on the politics of self-determination, sovereignty and human rights for Eelam Tamils which link Tamilnadu with the Eelam homeland and with the spaces where Tamil diaspora members are scattered. This wider conceptual approach is fruitful for considering implications of the interplay between Indian Tamils and transnationally situated Tamil communities as these actors are jointly involved in the politics of Eelam. The Indian Tamil youth’s political engagement and self-perception is situated within a transnational context and will also be illuminated in the thesis.

The concept of long distance nationalism proves to be inadequate in shedding light on the multidimensional characteristics of the political engagement displayed by transnationally situated Tamil communities when interacting with one another and towards their collective political cause. Therefore as Tharmalingam suggests, transnational approaches are more fruitful conceptualizations regarding the political activities of the

Tamil diaspora.

Anderson's concept of 'long distance' implies physical distance and geographically situated space as criteria for diasporic or transnational political engagement. The creation of social spaces integrated in a manner that transcends national boundaries and traditional constraints of physical distances, is not accounted for in such a conceptualization. In the age of increased globalization and heavy employment of communicative technologies enhancing engagement towards the homeland (country of origin) or its political cause, several spaces/spheres are formed through which actors are directly connected to each other. In accordance with such a transnational perspective, 'transnational communities' are entities immersed in an integrated space or field which transcend localities and geographic boundaries (Faist 1998; 2000). These 'transnational social spaces' (Appadurai 1991), are at the crux of the integration among Tamil communities who are situated in a multiplicity of localities. It is in these realms which transcend localities and national boundaries yet focus on 'local issues' that the dynamic interplay and interaction between the various Tamil communities occur. Anderson's concept is dependent on a geographical scope to analyze the political engagement of migrants. Furthermore it was coined when broadening of global transport e.g. cheaper international flights and communication technologies e.g. development of the Internet were still in fledgling phases, limiting cross border contact and transnational interactions. As Tharmalingam expresses *"This 'physical distance' approach is in contradiction with the 'space', approach where space is not bound by physical closeness, but with all kind of relations and affiliations that take place within the space."* (Tharmalingam 2011: 9)

Concerning Indian Tamils' political engagement towards Eelam, long distance nationalism, as an analytical concept, falls short in its grounding of physical distance to the homeland, the concept of a singular homeland as well as its reliance on only refugees/migrants as the agents of political engagement. The Indian Tamil political engagement towards the Eelam Tamil political struggle does not conform to any of these three categories. Indian Tamils involvement is thus a categorical peculiarity and points to a process of transnational politics which has hitherto been scarcely studied in anthropology.

Since my overall project is to map the negotiation of Tamilness and political identity, the interlocutor's subjective experience and their understanding of being politically engaged is paramount. To gain insight into the subjective texture of these processes, I have prioritized mapping the life-world and perspectives of individual activists in describing their commitments, values, motivations, opinions and reasons for being politically engaged. Such

an approach will also elucidate their understanding of connectedness or interrelatedness to transnational Tamils and the conceptualization of Tamilness. The apparent tension between a superimposed Indian identity category and a regionally prevalent Tamil ethnic identity is studied by documenting subjective experiences which illustrate such constraints, for instance when involved in an event of protest or discussion regarding the unfavorable stand of the Indian government in relation to Eelam.

Chennai

Chennai is situated in the north-western portion of Tamilnadu state, on the Coromandel Coast and has since the 1960s been the capital city of the state. Up until the 1960s it remained the seat of the Madras Presidency- the administrative unit established during the British Raj encompassing the modern state of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Tamilnadu and parts of Kerala. The DMK (Dravida Munnetra-Kazhagam) changed the name from Madras to Chennai during its incumbency citing Tamil nationalist ideals, as Chennai is a Tamil name and the former colonial. As the state's economic and educational/information nerve-center, Chennai is the locus for migration from other regions both within and outside the state. Through my study I was introduced to politically active students who later became my interlocutors. Surprisingly, they all hailed from outside Chennai, many from rural regions of Tamilnadu. They like many others had enlisted themselves in Chennai for higher education or work purposes. Many of the leaders of the pro-Eelam agitation as well as veteran Tamil nationalists are natives of cities, towns, and villages outside the state capital. Despite my research focusing on engagement and activists in Chennai, its dimensions reach far beyond the city and reflect the popular character of the politics which they represent. In terms of Tamilnadu, the activists and Tamil nationalist orientations are the politics of the masses.

The city is popularly divided into North Chennai, with predominance of lower and middle class neighborhoods and South Chennai with middle and upper class neighborhoods, yet such segregation are seemingly not rigid. Alongside the coastal belt of the city are fishing hamlets known as *koppam* which are specific in its caste and class constitution; lower caste people who are often laborers and fisherfolk. Class segregation in terms of space in Chennai is not absolute, as there are enclaves of working class in close proximity to upper class areas. Enclaves of working class settlements tend to be asymmetrically structured into the domestic economy of the upper class residents by being employed as maids, watchmen, cooks, and as

people washing and ironing clothes.

My interlocutors would point out their inability to attract Brahmin or upper class youth into their activism. It follows that the solidarity for Eelam, and Tamil nationalist engagement has by rule, contemporarily and historically been practiced by Tamil speaking lower and middle castes and classes. Although a higher class and/or caste participation is not unheard of, it remains the cogitation of the non-Brahmin population. It is thus a popular Tamil agitation reflected in the fact that participants are predominantly drawn from the Tamil masses. Brahmin oriented political activism tend to be oriented towards pan-Indian concerns and anchored on the basis of the Indian state, identity and nation. During the period of my research, there were anti-corruption campaigns across India led by the Indian nationalist and Gandhian Anna Hazare. These campaigns in Chennai, I was told by my interlocutors, attracted English educated Brahmin and associated sections of the upper class youth who would abstain from Eelam solidarity. It follows that the young Tamil students I studied all belonged to non-Brahmin castes and this was a predominant reflection of the composition of the Eelam solidarity movement.

Methodology: Political engagement in Scenes and Spaces

The phenomena I studied were complicated, by the fluid nature of the political engagement and the difficulty in locating the workings of political identity within a grounded geography conceived of as the field. I believe identity and engagement is constituted through the dynamic interplay of agitation, informal conversations, political education, literature, social media, transnational interaction as well as media coverage.

How do I then locate the field site to cover such forms of social action? The general locality is the city of Chennai, but the sites of activation are difficult to determine in geographical terms. The physicality of these social actions as observed varied and spanned across the city, in public spaces such as streets, parks and boulevards, virtual spaces such as the Internet and Facebook as well as private spaces such as within apartments, offices or other localities.

The expectations to have a geographically fixed field site has been pointed out by anthropologist Sawa Kurotani in her study of Japanese expats in an urban context where co-residence is near impossible, rendering only partial access to the informants life available for participant observation. She explains that “In this field of operation, the ethnographer’s mode

of existence also becomes transient, as she travels around and slips in and out of her ‘field’ along with her informants” (Kurotani 2004: 210). James Clifford has suggested that anthropologists as a response to such changed conditions for fieldwork should adapt ‘deep hanging out’ as coined by Renato Rosaldo (Clifford 1997: 55-58). In a similar vein I suggest that the political engagement of the urban Tamil youth is better understood as being manifest in scenes and spaces instead of in ‘sites’ and ‘places’. These ‘fleeting situations’ of political engagement will be my main focal point of study and thereby my field site. Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) in her study of political life in public spaces in Turkey, also argues that political engagement of citizens is best understood as being situated in fleeting moments and not within a physical delineated "field" (see below). To grasp the fluid processes which engender articulation of political life she utilizes rumors, gossip, hearsay in public spaces and media as the medium for its expression.

My study is based on a group of predominantly male activists aged between twenty to forty years and belonging mainly to two separate organizations. I have followed them over a period of six months during which they have politically engaged in the Eelam solidarity movement in Tamilnadu. I gained insight into their subjective experiences, values and opinions driving their political engagement as they navigate through various arenas of action. Similarly I was also sensitized to the relation of these epistemological processes with transnational social spaces. In order to broaden my scope to cover the political identity and consciousness at work in a larger context I examined activists’ utilization of media, news, and flyers, political meetings etc. Consequently there was a vague division between the ‘private’, ‘public’ and ‘virtual’ realms of the engagement.

My interlocutors as well as many other Tamil political activists are committed to other social roles and commitments as students, family members and professionals/workers in addition to their political engagement. Due to the urban context and the multiplicity of social commitments I had minimal access to traditional forms of participant observation which often involve some form of co-residence.

My access to the Eelam-solidarity movement in Chennai was made possible due to the goodwill and friendship of key interlocutors, who in this section I will briefly introduce.

Kumar hails from the peripheral regions of Tamilnadu and had emigrated to Chennai to work in the city’s expanding IT sector. He is one among the elder activists who has engaged towards Eelam since 2009. Selvan, from central Tamilnadu, is also a prominent activist who has been politically active alongside Kumar and was associated with Marxist organizations. Xavier, a veteran activist who had been prominent in the nascent days of the

solidarity movement was instrumental in university based demonstrations. He too hailed from outside Chennai and had lived in the city for a number of years. Marcus, a young political activist, had postponed his university education to engage in the solidarity movement. Marcus was a particularly articulate activist whom I had the opportunity to interact with over a period of four months and also accompanied during demonstrations. Paran, also a leading student activist has been a key actor in many demonstrations and political activities in Tamilnadu since 2011. Perumal, a particular cheerful character was considered the most veteran student activist who had been agitating since 2008. Pasupathi is another young student activist from the southern districts of the state who had been active since 2012 and with whom I developed a rapport during the end phase of my fieldwork. Theodore, a student from a town near Pasupathi's native place, had taken part in similar protests as Pasupathi.

All my interlocutors originate from the Southern and Western districts of Tamilnadu and in terms of religion most were from Saivite and Christian backgrounds; nevertheless they stated they were atheist in the traditions of Periyarites and claimed their political activism is what informed their self-conceptions. In addition to these main interlocutors there were numerous other activists with whom I interacted and some of whom I also interviewed during the course of the fieldwork.

In order to access the articulation of Tamil political identity and literacy I employed anthropological methods over a period of six months to study young Tamils' political engagement towards the Eelam cause. I conducted interviews, participant observations, informal conversations, 'hang-outs', 'go-alongs' and life histories to explore various forms of political engagement and the manners in which people articulate their concerned political identity. For the purpose of mapping the context and chronology of people's political engagement, I have collected news references, magazines and other related documents. In addition I have collected literature, albeit predominantly in Tamil, produced by the various movements involved in the agitations. This material is analyzed in order to understand the political identity at work.

Since early 2010 I have had the opportunity to travel several times to Tamilnadu, during which I was familiarized with central and southern parts of the city. This enabled me to observe political events in the state and to collect relevant material such as news references, magazines and literature. Being a Tamil speaker was an advantage despite national and dialectical differences, as I could understand and independently assess conversations with my interlocutors. Gradually as I accustomed myself to the phonetically differences in Chennai Tamil I was able to also transcribe speeches made at protests, local

print, and Television news and debates. I was also spared the potential difficulties of being dependent on a translator.

Amidst these advantages I was aware that my own ethnic identity and proximity to the people I studied is potentially problematic. Hailing from the Northern region of Sri Lanka, referred to as Eelam in the vernacular and being a Tamil, I might be expected to relate and engage in the politics of my informants. To my surprise I was not subjected to such an expectation or complication: rather it seemed that my ethnic affinity was the basis for trust and granted me access to individuals, topics and spaces which would have been difficult otherwise. Yet my background also caused concern and alert among some of my interlocutors when interacting due to the risk of police surveillance.

The fact that the engagement studied concerned the address of and protests against genocide, human rights violations, and oppression against Tamils from my country of origin made it ethically problematic and humanly difficult not to express or corroborate some of the opinions inherent in the political engagement of my interlocutors. Most central was the recognition of the violence perpetuated by the Sri Lankan state against Tamils on the island as systematic and intentional. However this ethical dimension of the fieldwork remained ambivalent, as the scholarly emphasis is on being objective and standing outside. The anthropological emphasis on 'standing outside' and position raises questions since any fieldworker and interlocutor is inevitably positioned within a larger socio-political and historic context encompassing both (Abu-Lughod 1991: 468).

In their benchmark article Ferguson and Gupta (1997) argue that the preoccupation with good anthropology as being detached and a good anthropologist as being alienated from their subjects is a result of notions of an archetype field and fieldworker. The colonial and Malinowskian legacy had institutionalized a particular disciplinary framework of reception and evaluation of anthropological work. In this anthropological framework there are archetypes which are implied and internalized and rarely explicitly scrutinized in dominant anthropological literature. The localized knowledge production which is privileged is highly conditioned in its constitution by class, gender and ethnicity/race. It is often the disconnected (in relation to the subjects), white, middle class individual which is the archetype fieldworker, and the exotic and otherness- filled locality which is the field. Thus many anthropological institutions "...privilege those who have no compelling reasons to work in particular localities or with particular communities other than the intellectual interest" (Ferguson and Gupta 1997: 16). Whereas for others and especially the native anthropologist "...leaving their commitments and responsibilities for the sake of untethered 'research interest' is for many

anthropologists a ‘Faustian bargain’, a betrayal for those people whose lives and livelihoods are inextricably linked to their own” (Ferguson and Gupta 1997:16).

The orthodoxy in the discipline promotes a form of localized knowledge production which neglects the dynamic dimensions of lived life by ignoring political and historical processes which transcend and interrelate with the locality, and blur the lines between dichotomized categories such as local and global, field and home, anthropological self and subject. Scholars have stressed that ethnography must accurately take into account the historic context of its subjects of study and “...register the constitutive workings of interpersonal international political and economic systems on the local level...” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:38-39). Regarding transnational dynamics and of relevance for my study on Tamilnadu Tamils’ political engagement, Marcus and Fischer also states “...external systems have their thoroughly local definition and penetration and are formative of the symbols and shared meanings within the most intimate life-worlds of ethnographic subjects” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:38-39). Although the fallacy of conceiving subjects’ knowledge as being locally bound and limited has been debated since the late 1980s, there might be a tendency to doubt transnational knowledge in praxis. My study shows that knowledge production in Tamilnadu, is transnational and has been facilitated by the development of the Internet and social media as well as critical events concerning Eelam Tamils.

Conclusion

The politics of Eelam is in effect a *transnational project*, as political activism oriented towards Eelam is manifested by diversely situated Tamil communities of both Tamilnadu and Eelam descent. Those who engage hail from diverse backgrounds ranging from Tamil immigrant communities in Canada, Norway, Switzerland, England, Germany and France to Tamil descendants of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence migrations in Malaysia, South Africa and Mauritius. By focusing on agitation and student organizations in Tamilnadu I chose to study and explore aspects of transnational interaction and the accompanying changes in identities and political engagement among Tamil youth in Tamilnadu. The increased interaction between the various transnationally situated Tamil speaking communities is axed on a shared political cause, and gives rise to new forms of identity politics and political literacy. My thesis argues that in the case of Tamilnadu Tamils’ engagement towards Eelam there is evident *nascent re-formation of Tamil nationalist political identity and imaginary*.

In addition to the description of the contemporary engagement I will also shed light on the activists' own understanding of Tamil identity and their engagement in solidarity with Eelam. What are the concerns of Indian Tamil student organizations and how do they articulate and understand political identity? The nature of being a student is temporary and superimposed on other social identities hence student agitations have in many parts of the world been short lived. Therefore I explore the factors which sustain Indian Tamil student activism. How do these young Tamils see themselves in relation to Tamilness, the Eelam Tamils and overseas Tamil communities? What is the self-conception of being Indian in the aftermath of the last war in Sri Lanka among the Tamil youth of Tamilnadu?

In the following chapters I will address these questions. In order to familiarize the reader with the subject of the study, I will in the second chapter give an account of the modern historical and political context of Tamil regions in both India and Sri Lanka. I will also throughout the study retain a focus on Tamil cosmology, as it constitutes the cultural sphere which gives meaning to political symbols, actions and ideas. Chapter three concerns the transnational interaction involved in the agitation for Eelam. Chapter four gives an ethnographical account of the solidarity movement, political literacy of the activists and various dimensions of their political engagement. In chapter five I discuss the various campaign activities and political traditions interwoven in the solidarity movement. The sixth chapter concerns the discussion of Tamilness, or Tamil identity and its role in the political engagement of Tamil activists. I provide ethnographical accounts of the interlocutors' actions, conceptions and ideas on the Indian state and media. The seventh chapter will provide a case study of a central event of the political engagement studied - Remembrance Day held in commemoration of the Tamils who perished in the North-East of Sri Lanka during the last war in Mullu'vaykal in May 2009. The case study illustrates activities and rituals of the solidarity movement advocating political justice for the Sri Lankan Tamils. In chapter eight I have given accounts of how the national media and the Tamil activists conceive each other and how this is by extension, a tension between Tamil nationalist orientations and pan-Indian nationalism. The dynamics between the Indian Central government in New Delhi and the Tamilnadu state will be scrutinized by utilizing centre - state relations as an analytical optic to understand the transformative effects of the political engagement of Indian Tamils towards that of the Tamils on the neighbouring island. This interaction between two Tamil people, who are officially citizens of two different nation-states, constitutes dimensions of transnationalism and nationalism, a peculiar phenomenon to which this thesis is dedicated.

Chapter 2:

Eelam, Tamilnadu and Tamil Nationalism

The island of Sri Lanka and South India including Tamilnadu has throughout history been interwoven into a socio-political, economic and cultural regional web where a nexus of interexchange of people, technologies, social practices, religious processes, goods, commerce, wars and political alliances have been common place (Indrapala 2005 :11-13). There are many literary references to the island and its Tamil speaking people in the ancient Tamil literary works collectively referred to as the *Sangam* literature. The earliest Sangam references designate the island in Tamil as both Eelam and Ilangai; in the *Pattupaattu*, *Akanaanooru*, *Kurunthokai* and *Nattinai*, there are passages in which there are references to a householder and a Tamil poet from Eelam and also food being imported from a port in Eelam (Indrapala 2005). Although both the Eelam and Tamilnadu Tamils developed differently and were subject to different historical influences and processes, they have generally shared a linguistic -cultural ethos.

Tamilnadu Tamils' political engagement towards Eelam has to be understood within the socio-political, historical and cultural/cosmological contexts of the Tamil speaking regions in South Asia. A key component of this context is the development of Tamil nationalism in Tamilnadu and its relation to Indian nationalism. The ethnic conflict on the island and the relationship between Eelam/Sri Lanka and Tamilnadu before, during and after the civil war constitutes a crucial background in interpretation of the present transnational politics of Eelam and the agitation in Tamilnadu.

The context for the development of Tamil nationalism and national imaginary is important in making sense of the political literacy, demands, actions and ideas exhibited by the interlocutors in the present. The opposition to the Indian Central government and the assertion of Tamilness and nationhood by the political activists would also be meaningful only through its relation to the cultural and cosmological context of Tamilnadu. As elucidated by Peter Worsley (1984: 249) "Cultural traits are not absolutes or simply intellectual categories, but are invoked to provide identities which legitimize claims to rights". In the phenomenon I studied, Tamil political identity, cultural traits and history are invoked to legitimize political claims in the present

concerning Indian Tamils and are also employed as a weapon by the latter to pressurize the Indian government to act on behalf of the interests of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

In this chapter, I will first give a brief historical context for the emergence of Tamil nationalism and its opposition to Indianess and by extension the Central state. Secondly I will elucidate a historical context for the conflict in Sri Lanka and the initial linkage between Eelam militants and Tamilnadu. The last two sections of the chapter concern the post-2009/Mulli'vaykal period, exploring Tamil cosmology and the ramifications of Mulli'vaykal in Tamilnadu and among Tamils in general. The above mentioned contextual layers are important to understand the life-world of Tamil activists and their situatedness in the world when engaging in politics.

Tamil Nationalism in Tamilnadu

On the threshold of the 19th and 20th century, there were several significant social processes in the Tamil speaking regions of the Madras Presidency in India. In the late 19th century Tamil Dalit intellectuals such as Iyoothe Thass and Rettimalai Srinivasan spearheaded the articulation of a Dravidian identity and ideology which identified and vehemently opposed the effects of Brahmanism on Tamil/ Dravidian society. They rejected the Vedic varnashrama-dharma system which sanctioned caste society and Brahmin supremacy (Aloysious 1998). Iyoothe Thass's work paralleled a period referred to as the Tamil Renaissance in which numerous notable Tamil scholars rediscovered ancient Tamil literary works and republished them (Zvelebil 1992). They formulated a Dravidian-Tamil identity based on a Tamil history which predated the effects of Aryan society pivoted around Brahmanical-Vedic logic. The rediscovery of Tamil literature and the anti-Aryan/Brahmin narrations cultivated a linguistic consciousness where the main concerns were to revitalize a pure Tamil absolved from the 'corruptive' effects of Sanskrit and to fight Brahmin/Aryan hegemony to uplift the Tamils. These processes provided the foundation for a Dravidian or Tamil political imaginary which would evolve into a powerful movement later influencing socio-political processes in the region.

During the early 20th century the increased domination of the minority Brahmin community in the fields of colonial bureaucracy, professions, education, and arts along with their opposition to non- Brahmin emergence in these fields lead to the emergence of anti-Brahmin sentiments among the educated and economically progressive high non-Brahmin castes. In 1912 they formed the Dravidian Association which later evolved into the South Indian Peoples Association, and finally converted into a political party with the name of

Justice Party in 1917 (Thandavan 1987:29- 30). On November 26th 1917, the organization issued a historic ‘non-Brahmin manifesto’ which opposed the transfer of colonial power to the Indian National Congress (INC) which was dominated by Brahmins. The Justice Party although opposing Brahmin supremacy failed to empower the lower sections of the non-Brahmin castes leading to several splits and the consequent weakening of the party (Rengaswamy 2006: 25-26; Ravikumar 2005: 14-15). E.V. Ramaswamy (Periyar), a former secretary of the Tamilnadu Congress formed the Self-Respect Movement (SRM) in 1925 vowing to destroy the varnashrama-dharma order, the INC and to abolish caste and untouchability.

In 1938 Periyar was elected the president of the decimated Justice Party and in 1944 he merged the party with the SRM to create the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) (Thandavan 1987:13, 29-31). The DK abstained from electoral politics and remained a social movement which continued the campaign to annihilate caste and untouchability and pledged to create an independent Dravidian republic. It is interesting that the secessionist elements were first articulated in 1938 by Periyar amongst others in the form of demanding Tamilnadu for Tamils, and on 10th September 1939 ‘Tamilnadu Separation Day’ was celebrated (Rengaswamy 2006 :31). The articulation of a Dravidian country encompassing South India was initiated by the DK as a measure towards forming a national identity inclusive of other Dravidian language populations, such as the Telugus of Andhra Pradesh, the Kannadigas of Karnataka and the Malayalis of Kerala. Nevertheless in terms of political mobilization the movement was confined mostly to Tamils and Tamilnadu. Thus the Dravidian political tradition was articulated upon the basis of Tamil people, history and language (Rengaswamy 2006; Rudolph 1961). In the wake of its failure to mobilize outside the Tamil state the Dravidian movement remained predominantly a Tamil phenomenon despite its inclusive pan-Dravidian orientation. The Dravidian movement’s basis, and in fact dependence on Tamil and Tamilness proved compatible with the Tamil nationalist orientations and an interlocking between Tamil and Dravidian nationalism was also evident in the contemporary Eelam solidarity movement.

In 1949 C.N. Annadurai with his followers break away from the DK and formed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) proclaiming adherence to the principles of the former leader. However in 1959 the DMK contested Indian elections for the first time and in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian wars of 1962 due to pressures generated and the interests of the DMK to capture state power, the party abandons the secessionist tradition. Veteran interlocutors underlined that they perceived these historical actions as marking the erosion of the radical Dravidian

tradition. Selvan informed me that its continuation in the state was ensured by smaller Tamil nationalist and Periyarite social movements which operated peripherally. The DMK oriented itself more particularly towards Tamil cultural ethos and linguistic pride than the DK, interlocking Dravidian and Tamil nationalism. The DMK also embraced the electoral means and proved more effective at harnessing mass appeal (Thandavan 1987:34-35). With the participation in electoral democracy the politics of caste informed votes gained renewed relevance in political mobilization in Tamilnadu. The veteran activists remarked upon it as unfortunate when discussing Tamil identity and nationalism. Since the 1970s caste and party politics increasingly became the focal point of political mobilization and orientation and have arguably weakened the emphasis on egalitarian Tamil/Dravidian identity associated with the Periyarite and Tamil nationalist movements.

A noteworthy character of the Dravidian-Tamil nationalists' movements of the 20th century was that Tamil activists identified both the INC and Brahmins as being intertwined in sustaining Aryan domination and the varnaasrama-dharma order and by extension the oppressors of Tamils and Dravidians. Consequently the Indian national project and Indian identity spearheaded by the INC was refuted by the socio-political movements in Tamilnadu which were propagating an egalitarian Dravidian-Tamil identity (Rudolph 1961). This dichotomization was most evident during attempts by the Indian government to impose Hindi as the official language at the state level. When the provincial council of the Madras Presidency came under the rule of the INC headed by C. Rajagopalchari in 1937, a Brahmin who was an ardent supporter of the Indian Nationalist project, Hindi was introduced as a compulsory subject in primary schools in the academic year of 1938-39. This met enormous opposition by the various social movements including the Justice Party, The Scheduled Caste Federation and the Self-Respect Movement (Rengasamy 2006:28). Major anti-Hindi agitation commenced which targeted C. Rajagopalchari and the schools where Hindi was introduced, partially contributing to the decision being abandoned in 1940. Again in the late 1940s and in mid 1950s Hindi was attempted to be imposed again, meeting rigorous opposition in the form of agitation. In 1965, regardless of previous staunch opposition the INC tried once more to impose Hindi in Tamil speaking Tamilnadu, showcasing a relentless effort in pursuing the Hindi based Indian nationalist project. The DMK and other Dravidian-Tamil movements organized massive agitations which paralyzed the state, and the attempt was finally abandoned (Anderson 2013:186).

In short, the language issue, Tamil/Dravidian identity, and the demand for political representation of the Tamil people became centrifugal in fuelling agitation. Furthermore

Tamil-Dravidian political identity was developed locally among Tamils and in opposition to Indian nationalism. During the heyday of Dravidian political mobilization the INC and their identity politics were regarded as the representative of a Brahmanical and Hindi order among Tamil activists. Significant for the thesis is how the fundament for a radical Tamil political identity and the growth of shared beliefs and consciousness in the present has its roots in these developments unfolding from the later 19th century to the 1960s.

The first historical context, elucidated above is that of the development of Tamilnadu based Tamil nationalism. The second historical context necessary to understand the galvanization of Tamil political identity in contemporary Tamilnadu is the Sri Lankan Civil War. The civil war has had tremendous effects within Tamilnadu as the increased globalization processes in the 1980s facilitated a flow of communication and information concerning the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Sri Lanka and the Backdrop of the Civil War

In Sri Lanka the political dynamics between the Tamils and the state was of a different nature than that between Tamilnadu and the Indian state, although in both cases it was centered on the Tamil language, nationhood, ethno-politics, discrimination and political rights. In Sri Lanka the primary stakeholders were two dominant nationalities, with the Sinhala elites controlling the state and oppressing Tamils on the basis of language, territory and ethnicity. Furthermore in Sri Lanka the state deployed its armed forces and counter-insurgency against the Eelam Tamils and the latter launched an armed national liberation struggle. Thus the dynamics of conflict developed differently in Tamilnadu and Eelam.

The onset of Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka in the late 19th century under the patronage of the British Royal Asiatic society, the Orientalist Theosophical society and the Buddhist clergy headed by Anagarika Dharmapala promoted the Mahavamsa Chronicle written in the Pali script which propagated a supremacist Aryan origin theory of the Sinhalese people as the rightful inhabitants of the island. As a consequence Tamils were viewed as invaders and immigrants from South India, and a strong anti-Dravidian tone pervaded the nationalistic mobilization of the Sinhala speaking communities (Kapferer 1988; Tambiah 1992; Fuglerud 1999). This form of Sinhala nationalistic mobilization proved to be integral in the later state orchestrated structural violence and

discrimination of the Tamil communities of the island (Kapferer 1988:35). The subsequent racism and state violence would in turn form the context for developments of Tamil nationalistic political mobilization in Eelam.

Since independence there were three major processes which accelerated the ethnic tension on the island, and they can be identified as 1) state aided colonization schemes in Tamil speaking areas of North and East (Peebles 1990) 2) discriminatory/oppressive laws marginalizing Tamils and favoring the Sinhala Buddhist majority (Leary 1981; Sieghart 1984) 3) The sporadic but frequent anti-Tamil pogroms orchestrated by the state (Senaratne 1997; Vittachi 1959; Wijesinha 1986:59-66). The discrimination and the collective oppression of Tamils continued throughout post-independence and in the 1950s and early 1960s a popular Satyagraha (civil-disobedience) mode of resistance was mobilized by the Tamil people under the leadership of the Federal Party (FP) demanding a federal framework for the island to resolve the conflict (Navaratnam 1996; Tambiah 1986). From the 1970s onwards police repression of Tamils intensified and Tamil militancy grew as a response (Wilson 1988; Ponnambalam 1983). The state endorsed counter-insurgency measures in order to quell Tamil political activity and resistance. Of significance here is that during the 1980s and the period of armed struggle in Eelam, Tamilnadu became an important locus of the dynamics of the Sri Lankan civil war. It was throughout this period known as '*pin talam*' or 'rear base' by the Eelam militants, denoting its strategic importance for Eelam (Sivaram 1989). Supplies such as medicine, petrol, food and other commodities were brought into Eelam by the militants from the coasts of southern Tamilnadu by sea during the period of war. During the period of war and government embargo on the Vanni, Tamilnadu facilitated the LTTE and other militants with means to access scarce resources. The research concerns the contemporary period, in which Eelam proves centrifugal in the political dynamics of Tamilnadu. Yet there are historical dimensions to the transnational interaction in which Tamilnadu proved influential in shaping the politics of Eelam.

In the late 1970s with the tacit support of the Indian government under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Tamilnadu Chief Minister M.G Ramachadran, various Tamil armed liberation movements thronged into Tamilnadu to partake in military training, lobby and political activities. Both the opposition DMK and the incumbent ADMK publically endorsed Tamil militants and supported them both financially and politically. Throughout the 1980s this interplay between Eelam Tamil and Indian Tamils intensified. It is worth noting that support was also elicited to the militants from sections of the students and social movements in Tamilnadu. This relationship grew complex with the deployment of the

Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the Tamil North-East Sri Lanka which caused much outrage among both Eelam and Tamilnadu Tamils for atrocities committed in Eelam. These developments subsequently led to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi allegedly by a Tamil militant suicide bomber in 1991. The IPKF presence was the result of an agreement between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan president J.R. Jayewardene in 1987, known as the Indo-Lanka Accord. The talks excluded various Eelam militants including the LTTE and the latter stated that the accord lacked mandate from the people of Eelam.

The period between 1990 to 1994 and 1995 till 2002, are known as Eelam wars II and III respectively. From 1990 till 1994 there were major battles between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces. In Tamilnadu, this marked a period of state criminalization of LTTE, police monitoring and harassment of Eelam Tamil refugees in India (Paus 2005). The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by a suspected LTTE suicide bomber and the subsequent state crack down on the LTTE created an atmosphere of fear in having association with Eelam. My interlocutors explained that their parents and relatives confirm such a situation at that point of time. The public support for LTTE in Tamilnadu and the advocacy of Eelam was subdued as a consequence. Kumar and others corroborated that several family members and colleagues would still discourage them from engaging actively for Eelam.

During the early 1990s the LTTE captured several areas of Eelam from the Sri Lankan military, including the Tamil capital of Jaffna leading to retreat of the state armed forces by air and sea to the south. In 1993, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Premadasa from the UNP was assassinated in the South Sri Lanka allegedly by the LTTE. In 1994, there was a regime change in Colombo, and Chandrika Bandaranaike and the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) became incumbent. She had rallied on a platform for peace, and the LTTE and the government went into a short lived peace agreement. The peace agreement was broken by reciprocal attacks from both sides followed by an unprecedented military offensive launched to capture Jaffna from the LTTE and bomb attacks by the latter in Colombo (Sathanathan 1995).

The Norway mediated Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) signed by both the Sri Lankan government and LTTE in 2002, broke down in 2006 when the government pulled out, and commenced a military offensive in the East which escalated into full scale war. The increased military aggression of the Sri Lankan state in 2008 resulted in more suffering of and atrocities against Tamil civilian populations in the island. The internet and the transnational Eelam Tamil media, the political activity of the concerned Indian Tamils, and social media such as Facebook made information regarding the situation in Sri Lanka

available for the Tamils of Tamilnadu. From 2008 as the war intensified and the rebels lost territory, the Tamil civilian population became victims of systematic state violence and military campaigns. Simultaneously a massive mobilization advocating an immediate halt to the Sri Lankan military offensive commenced in Tamilnadu as well as throughout many cities in the West where the Eelam diaspora lived. Throughout the last phase of the war major demonstrations reported to number in the tens of thousands were held in London, Paris and Toronto, while smaller demonstrations were held in Oslo, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Genève and Zurich (BBC 2009; Leslie 2009). During these events the transnational dimensions of the political engagement for Eelam, the humanitarian concern for the Eelam Tamils, and the subsequent protest against the Sri Lankan state crystallized.

These events and its effects are transnational in two aspects: First: in the diaspora Eelam Tamil context it was transnational through the agency of variously situated Eelam Tamil communities, as diversely located as from Toronto to Sydney. Second: the political engagement towards Eelam since the last war has been endorsed by another 'imagined community'- the Tamils of India. The engagement towards the politics of Eelam is ostensibly a trans-national phenomenon.

With the conclusion of the war on the shores of Mullaitivu in the North- East of Sri Lanka on May 19th 2009, there has been a sustained political engagement by political activists in Tamilnadu, towards political and human rights of Eelam Tamils. This is most evident at times of wide spread agitations during events related to the situation of Eelam Tamils.

The Last war in Eelam and the (Trans)nationalization of Memory

The concluding phase of the last war in May 2009, as mentioned earlier is referred to as Mulli'vaykal which denotes the coastal land strip where tens of thousands of Eelam Tamil civilians are reported to have been killed predominantly due to government bombardment as indicated in the UN Internal review report authored by Charles Petrie (2012).

Beside the human tragedy suffered by the Eelam Tamils, and the subsequent destruction of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Mulli'vaykal has gained utmost historical significance among Eelam and diaspora Tamils as well as Tamilnadu Tamils. Similar to how the Holocaust acted as the central reference point in the collectivization of Jewish memory and a catalyst for legal and political action, the Mulli'vaykal can be argued to play a similar role for

Tamils. Mulli'vaykal is remembered collectively as the 'darkest' phase in the Tamil peoples' history unsurpassed by any previous disasters, man-made or natural. It is a decisive event as well as an impetus for collective memory and the transnationalisation of the Tamil imaginary, through which Tamils located across the globe have come to share similar conceptions of the world under the narrative of Tamilness.

In Tamilnadu it is evident that Mulli'vaykal as a historical and traumatic event is central in the constitution of concerns and generalized beliefs among the Tamilnadu Tamils in relating to the Eelam Tamils as a 'kindred ethnic people' and victimized kin. Moreover Mulli'vaykal is also a critical event which galvanizes Tamilnadu Tamils into political engagement for Eelam. It is the nature of injustice, mass trauma and human loss which causes such outrage and concern on behalf of the Eelam Tamils. Based on my conversations with numerous activists it is evident that there is an element of collectivized trauma and guilt at play in the dynamics which sustain the Eelam solidarity engagement. This sense of guilt and powerlessness was grounded by activists in ethno-linguistic sentiments and the inability of the Tamilnadu Tamils during the last war to have any palpable effect in halting the Sri Lankan military offensive.

The inability to stop the war engenders a realization among activists on the conditions of Tamils in India as expressed by Kumar, Selvan, Marcus and Paran on several occasions:

"The unfolding of the Mulli'vaykal genocide proved to us how powerless we Tamils are within the Indian framework; during Mullivaykal we realized that Tamils do not exercise self-determination in India; it struck me with grief that despite our protests the Central government continued to support Sri Lanka".

An excerpt from a Tamil-English booklet written by a veteran Tamil leader and distributed in the nascent stages of the solidarity movement also expresses this sentiment:

"Tamilnadu sans sovereignty was unable to save the Eelam Tamil nationality. Though there are several factors, such as denial of linguistic rights and denial of riparian rights, to show the subjugation of the Tamil nation under Indian imperialism, it was our miserable inability to stop the war of genocide on Eelam Tamils that was the most telling reminder to us of our slavery" (Thiagu 2011)

The Tamilnadu Tamils' sense of vulnerability was underscored by the Indian government's

continued support to Sri Lanka in its military offensive against Eelam Tamils and the biased reporting in Indian media outlets. The Indian government maintained its political and military support of Sri Lanka throughout the war in 2009 despite widespread protests and agitation on the streets of cities in Tamilnadu. During this period the Indian national media through the coverage of The Hindu, Times of India (TOI) on print and NDTV, Headlines Today and IBN on television chose to reproduce news as propagated by the Colombo government in which the war and the military offensive was narrated as a “Humanitarian Rescue Mission” undertaken to liberate the Tamils from the LTTE.

Despite his young age, Pasupathi, had been involved in solidarity for Eelam since 2008 December, making him one of the veterans among my interlocutors. In conversations and during an interview he narrated an incident which involved the funeral of Muttukumar which proved central in the early phases of the agitation for Eelam in Tamilnadu. Muttukumar was a young Tamil journalist and political activist, who self-immolated in front of Shastri Bhavan (the Central government office complex) in Nungambakkam in Chennai in 2009. Ever since his death, the Shastri Bhavan has become one of the main public venues for demonstrations of pro-Eelam agitation. From an anthropological perspective, Muttukumars’ choice of voluntary death is interpreted by my interlocutors through the symbolism of Tamil cosmology and myths. Muttukumar, powerless in the wake of injustices inflicted upon his ethnic kin, sacrificed himself in front of the powerful Indian Central state institution. With this act, the Indian government is identified as the entity with the power to act and Muttukumar represents its ultimate moral challenge.

Muttukumar had written a suicide letter expressing his views on the war against the Eelam Tamils carried out by Sri Lanka and urged Tamilnadu Tamils to use his “body as a weapon” in agitation to stop the war (Tamilnet 2009a). In the letter he urged activists to take his body to the Tamilnadu Chief Minister’s residence and demand that the war be ended. His letter and the news of his self-immolation spread across the Eelam diaspora, alerting the latter on the commitment of the Tamilnadu Tamils towards stopping the war.

Tamil Cosmology and Contemporary Protest

In Tamilnadu Muttukumar marked the first ‘martyr’ for activists and subsequently more followed suit. Till date at least seventeen Tamils are reported to have committed self-immolation for the cause of Eelam and its Tamils. Pasupathi told me that this first martyr’s death sensitized

many Tamilnadu Tamils to the urgency of the situation in Eelam and brought about the realization that an *Ine padu kolai*, ‘genocide’ was being unleashed against the Tamils. In the letter in Tamil released by Muttukumar prior to his death, he narrated the situation in Sri Lanka and the ethnic conflict since independence (Tamilnet 2009a). He also stated that his sacrifice should impel a moral obligation among the people of Tamilnadu to fight for Eelam Tamils. In terms of activists who are agitating, Muttukumar’s words still resonate. He is held in high esteem, and his martyrdom is commemorated annually on January 29th. The phenomenon of veneration of his death is emulative of the LTTE cult of martyrdom which idolizes and celebrates violent death and sacrifice done in the name of its revolutionary ideals and towards Eelam.

Following Muttukumar’s self-immolation, youth, political activists and students filled the streets during his funeral procession and joined the fledgling agitation for Eelam. Kumar pointed out a spiritual side to the event, stating that as Muttukumar demands were not granted his ‘atma’(soul) would not be at peace. Tamil cosmology, tradition, cultural forms and ethos were integral in political engagement; one dimension was the role of fire and self-immolation. Why did Muttukumar choose the act of self-immolation to mark his protest? Why did it have such an effect on the political activists and the public at large in Tamilnadu? To understand the public significance and ramification of self-immolation and funeral processions a brief elucidation of a few dimensions of Tamil cosmology is warranted.

Traditional Tamil funeral processions, as shared by most castes are a public and collective phenomenon. The body of the deceased after the preliminary rituals of cleaning, washing, changing dress and performing rites, is transported by relatives who carry it on a wooden carrier on their shoulder, joining friends, distant relatives, colleagues, clients, general participants etc. and walk in procession towards the cremation ground. The procession moves for a considerable length of time in public spaces for public display and attention.

Self-sacrifice for justice or for a larger cause is also a powerful symbolic act enmeshed in Tamil cosmology and history. Marcus told me:

“Self-immolation has a long history among us Tamils, the idea that one should direct anger towards oneself, that must be in line with the Buddhist or Jain traditions we have had here long before. We need to find out why people commit such a dreadful act as burning oneself to death.”

He also compared it with Tibetans’ protest against Chinese occupation, claiming that

it was only Tamils and Tibetans who share such a history of self-immolations.

Shortly after Muttukumar's voluntary death, six more Tamils committed self-immolation for Eelam in Tamilnadu, Switzerland and Malaysia. Among them there were two Eelam Tamil men. The first, twenty-seven year old Raja committed the act in front of a Tamil Hindu temple in Serampan, Malaysia leaving a diary and note pleading to the world to save Eelam Tamils(Tamilnet 2009b). The second, twenty-six year old U.K. based Murugethasan committed self-immolation in front of the UN complex in Geneva, Switzerland on 12th February 2009 (Tamilnet 2009c). He had written a twelve -page letter declaring the intention behind his sacrifice:

“I believe the flames over my body, heart and soul will help the world community to have a deep human look over the great sufferings of the Sri Lankan Tamils.”

These were the first reported acts of self-immolation of Eelam Tamils and also indicated Muttukumar's influence on Eelam Tamils in the diaspora.

The self-immolation by Tamil activists has been directed against the Indian government, the UN and the West in frustration to stop the war. Murugathasan burned himself to death in front of the UN office in Geneva, while Muttukumar self-immolated in front of the Central government institution in Chennai. Symbolically speaking, they denounced the injustice perpetuated by the Sri Lankan government whilst simultaneously protesting the silence of India and the U.N.

Conversations about Muttukumar lead my interlocutors to mention another act of self-immolation in regard to the Eelam agitation. Senkodi, a female activist belonging to a Marxist organization self-immolated in August 2011 in protest against the Indian Central government's decision to execute three Tamils on death row in the Rajiv assassination case.

Marcus suggested that women sacrificing themselves in search of justice also has a historical context in Tamilnadu. For the activists' Tamil literature, history and myths conflate and create a past in which contemporary concerns are integrated in. The contextual backdrop Marcus was referring to was the story of Kannagi from *Cilapattikaram*, one among several famed ancient Tamil epics.

The commitment towards justice for Eelam, on behalf of their fellow Tamils, is plausibly strong, and without such sentiment and conception Tamil activists would not expose themselves to such extreme forms of protest. Andersons notes that the fact that people die in the name of their nation, reflected its extraordinary force (Anderson 1991).

Nationalism, as noted by scholars, invokes cultural-cosmological resources and metaphoric kinship terms in the expression of ethnic identity and also to gain political legitimacy (Worsley 1984; Nash 1988). In the case at hand, the interlocutors and their movements, albeit citizens in the Indian state invoke transnational characters, cultural traits and ethno-history in the expression of Tamil identity and political goals which transcend the Indian and the Sri Lankan states in being directed at the plight concerning another ethnic ‘nation’. I have observed that a sense of shared Tamilness and connectedness with Eelam Tamils drives the activists and solidary Tamils towards political engagement which positions them against political processes determined by the Indian Central-government and the Lankan government. Self-immolation can also be understood as an act of symbolic and physical protest, informed and communicated through Tamil cultural forms and cosmology. My interlocutors perceive it as a political protest employed by the dispossessed against authorities when injustice (*aanithi*) prevails. Such an act is interpreted by Tamils through Tamil cosmology, vested with cultural meaning. In another incident in 2012 November, twenty-six year old auto driver Vijayaraj, a staunch supporter of Eelam and a member of a Marxists trade union, self-immolated in Salem in Western Tamilnadu to protests Lankan President Rajapakse’s visit to India. He was rushed to the hospital but later succumbed to the extensive burn injuries. On his death bed, Vijayaraj insisted he speak to the media to proclaim his protest:

“Rajapakse who has massacred hundred thousand Tamils, should not be allowed at any cost to enter India. I did it, because Tamils should rise up against the Indian government who invites Rajapaksa” (Tamilnet 2012).”

Following his death, protests against the Sri Lankan presidential visit intensified, and on 7th February 2013 a group of men shouting slogans against Rajapakse attacked the Bank of Ceylon offices in Central Chennai, making headlines in Sri Lanka (Hindu 2013b). A similar protest took place previously when Rajapakse visited a famous Hindu temple in Tirupati in the bordering state of Andhra Pradesh.

The nationalist orientations, political actions, the use of cultural symbols and the act of involuntary death in the name of their kindred ethnic nation by Tamilnadu activists are reminiscent of the LTTE’s political ideology of the Tamil nation and liberation, a connection which will be discussed in detail below.

Death, Justice and Self-Immolation

Throughout history the concept of justice/injustice, voluntary death and fire has had a significant role among Tamils and their cosmology, whether through its metaphoric uses in ancient Tamil literature and imaginary or through cultural and religious practice and traditions.

Justice and vengeance is directly connoted with fire in the Tamil epic *Cilipatikaram*. Kannagi, the famed mythical heroine of the epic, upon discovering that her husband was unlawfully executed by the King of Madurai, confronted the king and in her vengeance burned down the palace causing devastation to the capital city of the Pandya kingdom (Pandian 2005). Kannagi is also worshipped as a guardian deity among Tamils in the Mulli'vaykal region of Eelam, where the massacres unfolded in 2009. Similarly among Tamilnadu activists in Chennai, a focal point for the assembly or conclusion of protest for Eelam is in front of the Kannagi statue in Marina beach, through which their engagement was symbolically connoted to Kannagi's mythical fight for justice.

In the cosmological sense and through popular imagery of the epic, fire becomes a weapon which the masses utilize to protest acts of injustice towards them, whether through aggression or through self-inflicted death. Tamilnet, an influential Eelam based English news site reporting on Tamil affairs, published an article in the aftermath of Muttukumar's self-immolation (Tamilnet 2009d). In this article, the historical basis for self-immolation among Tamils is briefly elucidated. The internet site Tamilnet has undoubtedly influenced the political literacy of young Tamil activists and intellectuals like Marcus. It also reflects the significance in Tamil nationalist intellectual traditions towards historical and social analysis to trace the present in the past, and the past in the present. Tamil cosmology is for political purposes analyzed as the basis for traditions of resistance. Paragraphs from the Tamilnet article are illustrative:

“The application of the religious practice, known as Vadakkiruththal in Tamil and Sallekhana or Nishidati in Sanskrit, for political and emotional causes is recorded at length in the Changkam Tamil literature in the instances of a king and a poet (Kopperugn-choazhan and Pichiraanthaiyaar). Sacrificing one's life with commitment to a cause, in valorous deeds or in violent revenge, is the other side of the story.”

Throughout the modern history of Tamilnadu, self-immolation has been used as a form of protest by activists against injustice. In the 1965 anti-Hindi agitation, several Tamil activists committed self-immolation in protest of the imposition of Hindi (Anderson 2013). As noted before it follows a cosmological basis and a political tradition in which sacrifice of life, whether *ahimsa* (non-violent) such as in fasting to death or *himsa* (violent) such as self-immolation, for a common cause is highly valorized and eulogized by Tamils. The rural Tamil country in particular in Tamilnadu is abundant with the presence of historic hero-stones (*natukal*) and there are known practices of hero worship throughout south-India (Fuglerud 2011). Such practices are also recorded in *Sangam* literature. Hero worship is an integral dimension of Tamil folk religion and is often in association with a hero stone, which is a small ancient stone shrine with engraving and epigraphy stating the deed of the *maveerar* (hero) (Kailaspathy 1968:76). The origin stories of local guardian deities are part of local oral traditions and recorded in epigraphs found on hero stones. They recount stories of warriors or others who have either sacrificed their life in the way of *ahimsa* or *himsa*, denouncing injustice and in protecting their community from outside threats and attacks (Settar and Santheimer 1982). Their divinity is vested through their acts of defiance against injustice and the commitment to sacrifice their lives for a common and universal cause.

Muttukumar was the first in line of many others who would commit self-immolation for the plight of Eelam Tamils. His death was an event alongside Mulli'vaykal which galvanized Tamilnadu Tamils into political engagement, politicization and protest. For the activists he was the epitome of the spirit of martyrdom in Tamilnadu, and his demands for the Tamilnadu people to agitate on behalf of Eelam Tamils is regarded a call for action. The symbols of martyrdom associated with the LTTE proved to be central to Tamilnadu Tamils' political agitation for Eelam. Interestingly the LTTE issued an official statement in which they recognized his martyrdom for Eelam by bestowing him the title of *Maveerar* (Tamilnet 2009e). It is worth to note that annually both Muttukumar and Murugathan are ceremonially commemorated together in Tamilnadu and in the diaspora as part of the tradition of paying homage to the martyrs of the LTTE. During a protest against the UNHRC resolutions in March 2014, Tamilnadu activists commemorated Muttukumar and Murugathan in the LTTE tradition of martyrdom by exclaiming the names of the dead preceded by *Veera'vanakkam* as a revolutionary salute to pay homage to the martyrs: "*Veera'vanakkam Muttukumar! Veera'vanakkam Murugathan!*".

Martyrdom and the LTTE

In the LTTE political philosophy and practice, fire and martyrdom retained a central role. Fire was considered by the LTTE and among its popular support base as representing the ever burning souls of the martyrs to achieve national liberation (*cutantiram*) which was to be realized through the formation of the independent state of Eelam (Schalk 1997).

Sacrifice, martyrdom and history was connected by the LTTE to the struggle for Eelam's independence. Through martyrdom individuality was merged with the collective Eelam Tamil nation, and likewise the individual sacrifice was conceived by the LTTE as channelized into the collective spirit of the Eelam Tamils. The martyrdom cult of the LTTE was crystallized and ritualized annually during the event of 'Maveerar'Nal ' (The Great Heroes Day) and Øivind Fuglerud (2011) illuminates:

“The celebration of the Maveerar Nal is another illustration of the extra ordinary skill of the LTTE in embedding its military struggle in semantic categories, ceremonies, and artefacts, which provide material form to their ideology. This is by no means accidental or haphazard, but it is the result of a systematic work led by the organization's propaganda office, the 'Office of the Great Heroes belonging to Tamil Eelam'(tamililamavirar panimanai), which was established in 1995. The main responsibility of this office, as the name indicates, were issues relating to the martial ideology of the LTTE and the commemoration of their war heroes. These issues were, and are still, at the centre of the Eelam-Tamil national project. ...it is through the veneration of the sacrifice of the soldiers on behalf of the national community that the struggle for freedom is made operational.”

The various components of the LTTE's political philosophy are intimately connected to Tamil history. The Eelam Tamil identity they propagated was inseparable from the national struggle for Eelam; national symbols such as the *Gloriosa superba* flower, the pillar of fire and the sleeping abodes (*Thuyilum illam*) in which the martyrs 'slept' represented the *thaagam* (thirst) for liberation (Schalk 1997; Fuglerud 2011). The sacrifices of their martyrs and its symbolic usage in rhetoric and ceremonies created continuity between the past and the present (Fuglerud 2011). Tamilnadu activists would explain the semantics of fire in reference to its symbolism in the Tamil cosmos and as interpreted by the LTTE by associating it with the struggle against

evil/oppression. Marcus, denoted its metaphoric importance by explaining that when a fire is lit it has the capacity to burn down or illuminate its surroundings. He suggested that that fire was the Tamil resistance and the surroundings the forces of oppression.

In Eelam and the diaspora many LTTE patriotic songs urge the people, the young, women and men to ignite fire in their eyes and souls and join the liberation struggle (Fuglerud 1999). Despite the historical and socio-cultural basis of perceiving self-immolation and fire as resistance or protest among Tamils, it is the LTTE and its politics which remains the dominant source which informs the Tamil agitation in Tamilnadu in the present.

Conclusion

Tamilnadu Tamils' political engagement towards Eelam and in support of Eelam Tamils is grounded in the socio-political and cosmological context of the Tamil speaking region. Despite Eelam Tamils' and Tamilnadu Tamils' diverse geographical locations and concept of being two distinguishable 'imagined communities', the Tamils of both Eelam and Tamilnadu origin have in common an overarching and shared linguistic, cosmological and socio-political foundation. Political symbols and cultural acts embedded in Tamil cosmology informed and still do today the political literacy, actions and identities of activists in Tamilnadu with recurring implications for the larger Tamil public. Such cultural embedment and political usage is facilitated and carried through transnational interaction in transnational social spaces. In this chapter I have provided the contextual layers which may help in interpreting the contemporary agitation in Tamilnadu in solidarity with Eelam, its Tamils, and the struggle for political justice.

Chapter 3:

The Transnational Character of the Politics for Eelam

In this chapter, I will focus on Tamil transnationalism, growth of shared conceptions among Tamil activists and the role of international processes in the constitution of my interlocutors world view.

The mass trauma and atrocities associated with Mulli'vaykal and the subsequent political dynamics provided the structural and subjective conditions for solidarity for Eelam to reemerge in Tamilnadu. Despite the efforts of Tamilnadu activists, neither the state and Central government nor the international community intervened to halt the last war. Such inaction contributed to increased atrocities against Eelam Tamils who were trapped within an ever decreasing territory on the North-Eastern coast of Sri Lanka by the military offensive of the Sri Lankan government forces. There is a range of documentation such as internal UN reports, Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT) verdicts, and human rights organizations' reports alongside videos, photographs and eye witness accounts which document the war. The British television broadcaster Channel 4 made an investigative documentary into the final phases of the war in Eelam and released their disturbing findings in 2013. The footage from the ground which they received from exiled Sinhala journalists was smuggled out of the island and independently verified. The 96 minute documentary '*No Fire Zone: In the killing fields of Sri Lanka*' quickly spread throughout the diaspora and in Tamilnadu, becoming an important medium for activists to observe and present the brutalities of the last war to English speaking audiences. The Sri Lankan state in return refuted the documentary as fabricated and in response created a film named '*Lies Agreed Upon.*' In the film, the government insists that they adhered to a 'zero civilian casualty' policy and advocates that Tamil civilian deaths were caused by 'LTTE terrorists'. Officials of the Sri Lankan government have been screening the film at international forums such as the UN office in New York to counter pressure on Sri Lanka.

The UN Internal Review report, known as the Charles Petrie report (2012), estimates that up to 70 000 Tamil civilians were killed during the last phase of the war predominantly due to deliberate government bombardment of designated 'No Fire Zones'. The proliferating

protests in Tamilnadu during early 2009 reflected the massive street demonstrations mobilized by the Eelam Tamil diaspora across major cities in the West. These processes formed the nascent basis of the contemporary transnational engagement between Eelam Tamils and Tamilnadu Tamils centered on Eelam solidarity.

Transnational Interaction

The concern centered on Mulli'vaykal and the political engagement towards Eelam exhibited transnational interaction between Tamils of India and Sri Lanka spanning over time and space. As the transnational dynamic is manifold, a rough outline of the various categories of politically engaged Tamils according to their nationality and geography is helpful in gaining an overview of the Tamil transnational nexus facilitating the agitation for Eelam.

I have chosen the following four typologies to describe the main forms of transnational interaction in the engagement for Eelam among the various categories of Tamils: 1) between the Eelam Tamil diaspora and Tamilnadu Tamils 2) between Eelam Tamil diaspora and Tamilnadu diaspora 3) between Eelam Tamils in the homeland and Tamilnadu Tamils in India 4) interaction between Eelam Tamil diaspora and Eelam Tamils in the homeland. These four typologies are rough delineations of the various forms of dynamics involved in the transnational engagement for Eelam, which often overlap and intersect. Concerning my study, the transnational focus will be fixed in the interaction between Eelam Tamil diaspora and Tamilnadu Tamils.

The second and third forms are somewhat limited and also outside the scope of my present research. The fourth form, pertaining to dynamics between the Eelam diaspora and those in the homeland has been subject to academic attention and is a phenomenon that spans back to the early 1980s (Fuglerud 1999).

When I asked my interlocutors about the degree of cooperation between Tamils in Eelam and Tamils in Tamilnadu, they noted that various political activists and organizations generally enjoyed healthy relations with political elements in Eelam and in the diaspora. They did however point out that contact was infrequent and limited to significant events. In other words, the interaction between the activists in the diaspora and those in Tamilnadu was not considered significant despite instances of cooperation. The interaction was most notably manifest in virtual spaces and in the exchange of opinions and sharing of information through social media and news websites. Tamil media proved to be a central

pillar in this virtual space which tied together various transnationally situated Eelam Tamils and Tamilnadu Tamils in their political engagement. As argued by Tharmalingam (2011), this sort of ‘nationalism’ transcends the boundaries of long distance nationalism, and is better understood as transnational interaction. In fact it is transnational in two aspects: first, that variously located Tamil people are tied together in a common field of interaction, and second, that the interaction exists between two separate ‘nations’, thus being transnational and pan-Tamil. My interlocutors underscored that student activists in particular engaged through social media and Eelam diaspora based websites which provide news reports and articles. These virtual spaces are transnational and inform the student activists’ shared interpretations and ideas.

The political engagement of transnationally situated Tamils towards Eelam consists of collective actions and shared perceptions, beliefs and networks centred on the advocacy of the political rights of Eelam Tamils. In their political engagement for Eelam, Tamilnadu activists appear to transcend national, class, caste and gender differences in mobilizing collective behaviour in the name of Tamil identity. Concerns centred on Eelam and nationalist sentiments can be argued as a source of social capital (Pinto 2006; Bourdieu 1980) for Tamilnadu activists to access symbolic, cultural and social resources, in order to mobilize collective behaviour towards nationalist ends. Such a process, is as noted by Woolcock (1998) as one of ‘linking social capital’ which denotes the organization of social ties which cut across power and status differentials in mobilization and contributes to processes of vertical solidarity.

Furthermore activists are also incorporated into a transnational social space transcending the boundaries of Tamilnadu and the Indian state. Through shared interests, political goals, cooperation in action and social interaction these diversely situated actors are bound together in what Appaduari (1991) has termed transnational social spaces. Such transnational social spaces facilitate transnational cooperation and interaction and are reproduced and expanded through such cross-border and inter-group social interaction. The transnational engagement for Eelam forms transnational social spaces, yet the access to these spaces and degree of engagement will vary according to the specificities of each category of actors as delineated in the four typologies above. The Tamilnadu engagement is not equal to the participation and access enjoyed Eelam Tamil actors in the transnational spaces of Eelam. This is determined by the historical, geographical, national and socio-economic conditions which differentiated the development of Tamilnadu and Eelam. The exodus of Eelam Tamils as refugees to the West and other countries due to the civil war in the mid-1980s formed the

basis for the transnational character of Eelam Tamils (Fuglerud 1999). Tamilnadu Tamils' entrance into such spheres of transnational space is still in its early stages and thereby is understood by the activists to be limited, ad-hoc and infrequent. During certain political events however, such as commemorations and demonstrations regarding Eelam, participation in the transnational space seems to be greater for Tamilnadu. For instance, in the aftermath of the UNHRC resolution in March 2014 there was an increase of Tamilnadu participation as opinions and write-ups concerning the resolution and Eelam proliferated in social media.

The interaction between Tamilnadu and the diaspora is still in its incipient phase, yet it was evident that the shock and trauma associated with Mulli'vaykal and the subsequent engagement of Tamilnadu facilitated intellectuals and activists from Tamilnadu to enter the transnational spaces pivoted around the politics of Eelam.

Since 2009 several events on both the international and local level concerning Eelam effectuated political actions from the diaspora, Eelam and Tamilnadu. It became evident that there was a transnational political engagement towards the same end: solidarity with the politics of Eelam and in protesting the plight of Sri Lanka's Tamils. The increased political activities undertaken by Tamilnadu Tamils in creating awareness on Mulli'vaykal and organizing solidarity and support for Eelam Tamils' political demands illustrate such a dimension. The fact that those who self-immolated in the name of Eelam hailed predominantly from Tamilnadu also underlines a transnational aspect in which Tamilnadu Tamils take a central stage in the advocacy for Eelam Tamils. The trajectory of the political engagement of Tamilnadu and decisive events enabling transnational activism has been dealt with in the next chapter.

The Imagined Community and Strategy

My interlocutors, the organizations they were part of and other activists themselves termed many of their demonstrations '*mutturai porattam*' which translates as symbolic protests and as driven by '*ine'partru*' denoting ethnic sentiment and patriotism. I was told that the activists would display protests even if in smaller numbers than ideal, to register opposition and reproduce the agitation for Eelam over time. Thereby the objective of these protests is not to draw large crowds but to politically mobilize and register protests over time. These events were then circulated through televised and print media as well as through social media to further consolidate the political literacy among the people of Tamilnadu on the plight of

Eelam, Indo-Lanka relations, and perhaps Tamilnadu's own position vis a vis the Indian establishment.

In 2013 the pro-Eelam protests also spread to rural regions of Tamilnadu and soon the popular peoples' agitation against the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) intertwined with the agitations for Eelam. The rural-urban solidarity through nationalist mobilization is well studied since its emergence in the First world in the wake of the French revolution and industrialization (Eriksen 2002; Handler and Segal 1992). Such conjunction between environmental concerns of Tamilnadu and the political engagement towards Eelam was cited by interlocutors as being grounded in Tamilness. Scholars have noted that rather than personal or organizational background it was political conviction and adherence towards a collective identity which facilitated political engagement among individuals towards collective causes (Porta and Darini 2002; McAdam and Fernandez 1990; McAdam and Paulsen 1993). Nationalist ideology and transnational interaction axed around Eelam are providing political entrepreneurs, activists and movements with social capital, resources and cultural idioms to spread and cultivate shared political identity, interpretations and conceptions among the various strata's of Tamilnadu Tamils.

Transnational interaction through the politics for Eelam is arguably a conscious strategy by the Taminadu activists in gaining social and political resources through which to mobilize people in Tamilnadu. This may also be a dialogical process in which the growth of ideas, conceptions and beliefs associated with solidarity for Eelam and the nationalist sentiments towards Tamilnadu are mutually spread through and communicated by Tamilnadu activists to the state's Tamil speakers.

An apt illustration of the above are the events in Idinthakarai, the epicentre of the anti-nuclear energy demonstrations where thousands of villagers including school pupils took to the street demonstrating for Eelam and against the UNHRC resolution and Sri Lanka. The people of Idinthakarai also commemorated the Mulli'vaykal Remembrance Day in 2012 and 2013. In a symbolic protest, the leaders of the Koodankulam protest burned a copy of the UNHRC resolution and espoused support to the Eelam solidarity movement (Tamilnet 2013b). These events also gained coverage in the diaspora through popular English language online news sites such as Tamilnet and Tamilguardian. To reciprocate the solidarity Eelam activists in the diaspora held demonstrations in support of the Koodankulam struggle and the student agitation in Tamilnadu.

These instances of intersection display firstly that political engagement for Eelam serves as a uniting force for several political engagements emanating from various sections of

the population of Tamilnadu. It is a particular form of transnational dynamic through which political engagement from Tamilnadu towards Eelam facilitates further political consolidation of Tamilnadu Tamils under the banner of nationhood. Secondly it also reflects the multiple dimensions of Tamil nationalism, wherein various political traditions and protests are intertwined with narratives of Tamil nationalism which the politics for Eelam remains centrifugal in facilitating. Thirdly these instances indicate the degree of intersection between the respective political consciousness, engagement and discourse of the Eelam Tamil diaspora and the political activists and people of Tamilnadu. Although in a rudimentary state the Tamil political imaginary attains a *transnational character* during such events.

Organic Intellectuals and Political Entrepreneurs

Throughout early 2009, Tamils from all walks of life, such as students, professionals, journalists, lawyers, political activists, film directors, writers, poets, musicians, workers and others were participant in a burgeoning civil protest against the war in Sri Lanka. They demanded that the Indian government take action in international forums to stop the war. In the early phases as well as in the present it seems there is a core of activists and intellectuals who sustain the agitation for Eelam over time and space. Young activists such as Paran and Marcus or veteran activists such as Kumar, Xavier and Perumal are what Gramsci defined as organic intellectuals and what is called political entrepreneurs by sociologists (Crehan 2002; Porta and Diani 2006). They remain as crucial actors in mobilizing and elaborating the ideological and organizational affairs of the social movement for Eelam. It was the sustained political engagement of groups of core activists, their efforts in bringing together pro-Eelam elements at protests, their influence on public discourse on the plight of Eelam which had a significant role in gradually politicizing the general public, in particular sections of student. These political activists constituted a politically focused force that sustained and made visible debate and discourses on Eelam within the public sphere of the state, mainly in Chennai. While broadcast and social media constituted crucial venues to disseminate and articulate the political beliefs of the engagement for Eelam, demonstrations, street propagations, meetings, awareness campaigns, and distribution of pamphlets were also central mediums for the activists in spreading their political views.

Discourses and Growth of Shared Conceptions

Many activists opined that the KKNPP protests were influential on the political debate and discourses in the state. Marcus was most elaborate on this account and explained that media coverage and public debate over the KKNPP protests also facilitated discourse on social media and television on politics pertaining to Tamilnadu. He noted how these mediums were cultivating and disseminating a political discourse centered on Tamilness and social change. Likewise Muttukumar's suicide letter bore a profound socio-political effect on Tamilnadu and was distributed by activists in public, private and social venues as well through Tamil internet sites. It effectuated the first large scale peoples' mobilization on behalf of Eelam since 1983. It is notable that the attitude of the state media changed from censorship during Mulli'vaykal to providing coverage during the period of my fieldwork. Tamilnadu based television programs and debates as well as certain newspapers were frequently giving space to the solidarity movement and the political struggle of Eelam. Television debates were also popular in terms of bringing public discussion on Indo-Lanka relations through the prism of Eelam solidarity.

Discourses pertaining to Eelam and KKNPP conflated and influenced public opinion of students and others in the state. At this juncture an environmental concern of preventing nuclear energy in Tamilnadu is interlocked with human rights violations perpetuated against Eelam Tamils. Tamils of Tamilnadu and Eelam were in such discourses connected in terms of both being deprived of self-determination and a section of activists in fact imagined and propagated the police repression in Koodankulam as similar to Mulli'vaykal. Although this seems an extreme exaggeration it reflects the cognitive connection Tamilnadu activists make between violence in Eelam with contemporary acts of the Indian state in Tamilnadu. This was indeed a cultural construction of transnational dimensions which manipulate history for political purposes as they were extending experiences of violence, mass trauma and fear as observed in Eelam into the collective memory of Tamilnadu Tamils. Yet such a structural-functional explanation would not satisfactorily explain the transnational and cultural realm which influences the interlocutors' conceptions of the world or their actions. The transnational spaces of Eelam seem to be part of their life-world. For the activists any events connected to Eelam, especially political events are salient and form the agitation and by implication, their lives. It is interesting that the agitators, not only react to incidents in Sri Lanka involving Tamils, but also direct their protests towards international and regional processes in an effort to influence local dynamics.

When narrating the early days of political engagement Kumar would sadly remark “How naïve we were to expect the Indian government to pressure Sri Lanka”. Kumar’s view is reflective of the general agitation as similar opinions are expressed in speeches, pamphlets and conversations of activists and movements. In the perceptions of the activists, the inability to stop the war corroborated an already existing Tamil nationalist discourse which proclaimed that Tamils in India were oppressed and disempowered. What accentuated the situation in 2009 was the Indian Central government’s involvement in supporting the military efforts of the Sri Lankan government while ignoring the demands put forth on the streets of Tamilnadu. In an attempt to shatter the apathy which they observed, their agitation for political justice for Eelam Tamils was intensified. A chief demand of the Eelam solidarity movement in Tamilnadu has been crystallized since 2010 and has taken the form of demanding 1) International investigations into genocide against Sri Lanka 2) The establishment of an independent Eelam on the island as a permanent political solution for Eelam Tamils 3) Implementation of an economic embargo upon Sri Lanka 4) To conduct an referendum on self-determination among Eelam Tamils. The activists and their political discourses interpreted international, regional and national events through the spectrum of shared conceptions of the world and political orientations associated with the agitation for Eelam. At centre-stage in this world view is the conceptualization of the nationhood of Eelam Tamils as distinguished from that promoted by the Sri Lankan state and the latter’s action towards the Eelam Tamils as genocide.

Genocide

To understand the discourses centered on Mulli’vaykal and the centrifugal role of the event in the collective memory of Tamils, and in informing the actions of my interlocutors it is necessary to understand the nature of the last war, alleged by Tamilnadu activists and Eelam Tamils to constitute genocide.

Genocide is a crime under international law, and was first coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1946 from the Greek word *genos* denoting clan and race, and *cide* which means killing. This term was an attempt to grasp the processes which systematically aim at the destruction of national characteristics and members of specific social groups. The systematic destruction of the Armenian nation by the Turkish republic during the First World War and the eradication of Polish, Jewish, Slavic, and Gypsy populations during the Nazi occupational

regimes in the Second World War brought in their aftermath serious international concern regarding the conceptualization of the crimes and mechanisms to punish and prevent such atrocities (Lemkin 1946). The notions of massacres and war crimes were deemed inadequate in order to conceptualize the intention, motivation and magnitude of such crimes, thus they became *Crimes without a Name*. The geographic dimension of such deliberate crimes targeting particular national, religious, racial/ethnic social groups e.g. through systematic land alienation, ethnic cleansing and colonization were also unaccounted for through such terms. As a response to the inadequacy of judicial and conceptual capacities of established terms Lemkin defined genocide as:

"The crime of genocide should be recognized therein as a conspiracy to exterminate national, religious or racial groups. The overt acts of such a conspiracy may consist of attacks against life, liberty or property of members of such groups merely because of their affiliation with such groups. The formulation of the crime may be as follows: "Whoever, while participating in a conspiracy to destroy a national, racial or religious group, undertakes an attack against life, liberty or property of members of such groups is guilty of the crime of genocide."" (Lemkin 1946)

Following Raphael Lemkin's definitions the UN adopted the Genocide Conventions in 1948 which held less clarity regarding the political, economic, cultural, judicial and territorial dimensions of genocidal practice with intentions to eradicate the national characteristics of a targeted nation. The category of political group which Lemkin had included in his definition of genocide was left out by the UN convention after pressure from member states involved in persecution of political opposition. Moreover the weight placed by the UN convention in categorizing the crime of genocide only by proving 'intent' to destroy in whole or part a group, has rendered the practice of proving this in a court of law challenging. This sort of compromise by the UN is due to their dependence on powerful member states. Despite such constraints the 1948 convention was reified in the Rome Statute by the international community in 1998, thereby maintaining the legal framework for identifying and punishing such crimes against humanity. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established in 2002 towards such an effort, yet the Sri Lankan case has despite demands by Tamils still not appeared at the ICC. Forerunner to the ICC were the International Criminal Tribunals on Rwanda and Yugoslavia respectively, through which war crimes were investigated and perpetrators of crimes against humanity and genocide were convicted by UN courts or internationally monitored local courts. In the case of Sri Lanka the current international stand

favours an internal investigation and reconciliation process. Lemkin underscores the requirement of international intervention to arrest genocide:

"The problem now arises as to whether it is a crime of only national importance, or a crime in which international society as such should be vitally interested. It would be impractical to treat genocide as a national crime, since by its very nature it is committed by the state or by powerful groups which have the backing of the state. A state would never prosecute a crime instigated or backed by itself."(Lemkin 1946)

A radical Tamil nationalist ideology informs the Tamilnadu activists and consequently their interpretation of events at the international, regional and local level. It is in the backdrop of a range of historical events and related international dynamics that the Tamil activists I studied agitated for international investigations into genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sri Lanka. As the agitation progressed the activists told me that they had observed how the non-interventionist international stand continued regarding Sri Lanka and how the Indian government pursued tighter linkages with Sri Lanka.

Claus Offe (1985) termed the politics of 'new' social movements, in contrast to traditional social movements constituted by class interests, as a meta-critique of the established political order and the workings of representational democracy. Tamilnadu activists' views, beliefs and discourses, stipulate a critique of the Sri Lankan and Indian state and the workings of the international community and its organizations. Their demand for political power to influence international affairs and the situation in Sri Lanka can be argued as forms of radical democracy advocated and mobilized through the prism of Tamil nationalism and transnationalism.

Beside Lemkin's works, there was another international event, in Bremen, Germany which is often referred to in my interlocutors' advocacy for Eelam and influenced their conceptualization of the situation in Eelam as genocide. In December 2013 the Permanent People's Tribunal (PPT) conducted a four day session, termed the Peoples Tribunal on Sri Lanka (PTSL) which investigated the allegations against Sri Lanka based on an expert panels' evaluation of evidence. Their verdict stated that Eelam Tamils constitute a nation and that the Sri Lankan state was guilty of the crime of genocide against Eelam Tamils (PPT 2014). The PTSL also charged the U.S.A. and U.K. complicity in the genocide in Sri Lanka due to their relationship with the government during the course of the civil war. The PPT was established by Bernard Russell and Jean Paul-Sartre in the 1960s to conduct a peoples' tribunal on the actions of the American forces during the Vietnam War. This was pursued by

the philosophers as the UN system proved inadequate. The PPT brought forth the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against the US forces which gave momentum to the Anti-War Movement in the U.S.A. and Europe. Since then the PPT has conducted tribunals on a range of conflict situations, from Guatemala, El Salvador to Afghanistan and Iraq.

International Events and Local Dynamics

Following 2009, there has been a range of events which have influenced the outcome or execution of protests. Such a dimension was expressed by activists themselves when lamenting that they were only mobilizing a reactive struggle, by responding to events orchestrated on the international (UN), regional (India) or local (Sri Lanka) level.

By following demonstrations, discourse on Facebook, and through interaction with activists, it became evident that there are two broad camps within the general solidarity movement. The main theme of divergence proved to be in response to events in the international arena which concerned human rights in Eelam. There soon emerged two divisions within the general solidarity movement. The camp deeming the UN paradigm of war crimes and crimes against humanity as an acceptable approach are in the thesis referred to as the moderate camp. The other section, which I term the radical camp, demanded an international investigation into genocide as this was considered the only means to adequately cover the extent and nature of the violence perpetuated against Eelam Tamils. The radical camp also developed a strong anti-U.S. line in which anti-imperialist tendencies converged with the views of the PTSL verdict, which identified the U.S.A. as party to the Sri Lankan government in the conflict against Eelam Tamils. The division over the U.S. led UN process on Sri Lanka influenced the unfolding of the mobilization of the solidarity movement in 2014 as the moderate and radical camps pursued separate strategies, demonstrations and discourses in the interpretation of the UNHRC resolutions and international investigation.

In March 2013 and 2014, the UNHRC held the 24th and 25th session in Genève where human rights abuse in Sri Lanka was the primary subject. The U.S. co-sponsored a resolution which urged the Sri Lankan government to address the allegations internally and co-operate with a proposed UN inquiry. In March 2014, *Colombotelegraph*, a European based news-wire run by exiled journalists from Sri Lanka, released the leaked draft of the 25th U.S. sponsored UNHRC resolution which impacted the local dynamics of the Tamilnadu agitation. As mentioned earlier, a section of interlocutors claimed that the U.S sponsored resolution gave international legitimacy to Sri Lanka by sanctioning domestic investigation into

allegations of war crimes against its own forces. Likewise it elicited responses in the Eelam diaspora and within Eelam in the form of demonstrations and discourses condemning it as a feeble resolution against Sri Lanka. Within Sri Lanka it caused outrage from the government and state centric civil society. In contrast to Tamilnadu and Eelam Tamils, the Sri Lankan government condemned the resolution as biased and an unwarranted interference in a sovereign country of the global South. The UNHRC resolution has as the previous year, been a focal point of reference for mobilization and political engagement for Eelam. This was very evident in the discourse and demonstrations taking place in Tamilnadu. The largest division in the entire spectrum of political and social actors on behalf of Eelam has been axed on whether to engage with or denounce the UNHRC resolution.

Despite being oriented towards international events, the transnational bonds with Eelam Tamils, and the nationalistic engagement of Tamilnadu activists, proves more decisive in the regional context, in which Tamil politics transcend the folds of established nation-states and attempt to influence the state to state bonds of Sri Lanka and India.

Tamil Transnationalism and Indo-Lanka Relations

There were two forms which I observed in which opposition was displayed by interlocutors and the solidarity movement, directed at regional, international and national politics concerning the Sri Lankan government. Firstly there are the protests against Indian participation at international forums where the role of Sri Lanka is central, such as during the Commonwealth Head of Government Meet (CHOGM) staged in Colombo in 2013 September. Secondly, the Tamil protests against Sri Lankan officials visiting spaces in India or when Indian officials visit the neighboring island. Since 2009 the Sri Lankan and Indian governments pursued stronger relations apparent in the increases in state to state visits.

The transnational character of pan-Tamilness, shared conception of the world and the subsequent political literacy drives the agitating Tamils in Tamilnadu in their opposition to the cordial Indian foreign relations with the Sri Lankan government. Accordingly they have mobilized several protests against Lankan officials visiting India. When asked about the Indian state, my interlocutors would often reply along the lines that they could not fathom that a state supposedly reflecting Tamilnadu peoples' interests, instead pursues the opposite by strengthening and continuing its ties with a government accused of genocide of Eelam Tamils, their ethnic kindred group. Although these protests would gain widespread

circulation within Tamilnadu and the diaspora, it would not directly deter state to state relations between Colombo and New Delhi.

The opposition to the Indo-Lanka relations was by activists and corroborated by my interlocutors interpreted as legitimizing Sri Lanka's oppression of Eelam Tamils. The activists claimed the Indian government prevented Tamil interests from interfering with Indian national interests and foreign affairs. Nonetheless the various organizations and activists of the pro-Eelam movement have since 2009 protested at several venues where Indo-Lanka relations are manifest. This includes dominant political parties of Tamilnadu such as the DMK or ADMK have occasionally collectively displayed protests outside the Central parliament in New Delhi at these instances.

To the disappointment of Tamilnadu activists the CHOOGM was held in Colombo in September 2013, and the chairmanship of the Commonwealth was also delegated to Sri Lanka's former President Mahinda Rajapakse. Marcus retold how he and his comrades had viewed this as affirmation of the West's support of the Sri Lankan state. This was popular discourse among the students and activists, and the CHOOGM event seemed to strengthen the arguments of the discourse.

The students alongside protesting the CHOOGM in Colombo also directed their anger at the Indian delegation led by PM Manmohan Singh who was expected to be present at the event. Thereby the CHOOGM was also an event, which propelled the various movements and the larger public to mobilize various forms of protests, once more for Eelam and against Sri Lanka.

The event was also heightened by the symbolic hunger fast undertaken by veteran Tamil nationalist Thiagu, demanding the Indian boycott of the CHOOGM. Thiagu was also renowned among the youth and my interlocutors for his Marxist militant past. The protests spread to various parts of Tamilnadu with popular participation from various sections of the population. This was a general indicator of how pro-Eelam protests emanating in Chennai spread across the length and width of the state.

On November 11th 2013, the Western section of Tamilnadu, in Coimbatore, Coonoor, Namakkal, Tirupur and Erode protests were organized by various movements against the CHOOGM (Hindu 2013b). The activists resorted to road blocks, rail blockade, hunger fasts, street protests and hartals (general strikes). In Coimbatore, small shop owner associations and other small business and worker associations closed their shops and services in solidarity with Eelam and in support of the activists protesting the CHOOGM.

The most inflammatory event for Tamil activists was the invitation of

Rajapaksa to attend the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inauguration ceremony. I was present in Chennai during this period, and interacted with activists as well as observed three demonstrations against the invitation. Shocked by the unexpected event, as such invitations to a neighbouring head of state are not standard procedure, the student activists told me that the "arrogance and apathy" from New Delhi warranted protest. They were saddened that the Indian government, despite the regime change and their agitation was only increasingly endorsing Sri Lanka and by extension its crimes against their kindred ethnic nation.

The continuous pursuit of cordial Indo-Lanka relations by the New Delhi government underscores scepticism widely held in regard to the Indian Central-state relations among politically conscious Tamils. Such an effect is in fact widely propagated by Tamilnadu political leaders when addressing India. A video clip available on the internet documents a speech in advocacy of Eelam delivered on 07.03.2013 in the Lok Sabha (Indian national parliament) by VCK (Dalit Panthers) leader and Member of Parliament Thol.Thirumavalan, a renowned Tamil nationalist-Dalit leader in Tamilnadu. He provides an apt illustration of the popular sentiment in Tamilnadu regarding Indo-Lanka relations, reflecting the demands on the streets and as expressed through resolutions at the state assembly (See Appendix 1). The speech emphasised the political literacy of the agitating Tamils, as well as tension between Tamilnadu and India over the issue of Eelam and Lanka. That a Tamil nationalist Dalit leader renowned for fighting casteism advocates Eelam, corroborates that Eelam solidarity transcends previous divisions of caste and political interests within Tamilnadu. The VCK representing Dalits and the PMK (Proletarian Mass party) representing lower caste Vanniyars, previously embroiled in caste clashes against each other, came to share a common Tamil nationalist platform in advocacy for Eelam. This will be a central theme in the chapter on the multiple faces of Tamil nationalism, in which I argue political ideas associated with various political traditions are interweaved together through activism for Eelam and the contemporary Tamilnadu nationalist orientation. In the speech, reflecting the general mood of the agitation, Thirumavalan also announces that the nationhood of Tamilnadu Tamils is different from that of the Indian state, implying that a continuous apathy towards Tamil sentiments would crystallize division in the minds of Tamil youth. A Tamil national sentiment of this nature paves the way for me to introduce the next chapter, which details an ethnography of the solidarity movement and associated events, thoughts and emotions oriented towards Eelam.

Conclusion

I have in this chapter argued that that the dynamics between India and Sri Lanka on one hand and Eelam and Tamilnadu on the other shape and condition the agitation. In other words, Indo-Lanka relations, the UN's approach to Sri Lanka, and the transnational interaction between Eelam Tamils and Tamilnadu Tamils proves to be integral in the politics for Eelam as protests are organized in response to such international, regional and transnational dynamics. The next chapter will further explore the development of the solidarity agitation through a focus on my interlocutors' explanations, experiences, practices and reasons for engagement.

Chapter 4:

The Eelam Tamil Solidarity Movement

The current political engagement towards Eelam constituting the solidarity movement in Tamilnadu with Chennai as its epicenter, has grown stronger since the last war in Sri Lanka. With the Eelam solidarity movement I refer to all social and political organizations, associations and activists who since 2008/09 have engaged in agitations for political justice for Eelam and demand that perpetrators of the crimes perpetuated against Eelam Tamils before, during and after the Mulli'vaykal massacres, are brought to justice. As mentioned earlier, this movement brought together various and even conflicting components of the Tamilnadu polity under the banner of Tamilness and Eelam. It is 'the Mulli'vaykal genocide' and the rights of Eelam Tamils which are the common reference of concern for the various constituencies of the movement.

The last war began to have ramifications in Tamilnadu during December 2008 when it intensified and internet web sites run by Eelam Tamils, particularly from the diaspora, disseminated news and information accessed by Tamilnadu activists. In contrast to the increased interaction during the 1980s after the IPKF period and the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, Tamilnadu and Eelam had become progressively disassociated from each other. During the last war in 2009, geographical proximity and common language between Tamils in Sri Lanka and India was stressed by activists as the source of connectedness and shared Tamilness. Through the agitation shared Tamilness formed the central reference point for the surge of solidarity, in response to atrocities committed against the Eelam Tamils by the advancing Sri Lankan armed forces. Activists frequently expressed solidarity in fictive kinship terms such as *thoppal'kudi inam* (kindred ethnic group) and Tamil *rattam* (blood). Cultural connectedness, as pointed out by anthropologists is central in political mobilization of ethnic groups for nationhood and political rights throughout the world (Eriksen 2002). Yet in the case at hand such faculties ensured transnational as well as national political mobilization and engagement concerning two kindred ethnic groups living in various countries. The lingo-ethnic affinity also engendered a form of guilt among Tamilnadu Tamils, as my interlocutors expressed such in relation to the unfolding of atrocities committed against their *thoppal'kudi inam* and their inability to protect "our brothers and sisters across the

straits". The emotional outrage, mass trauma and transnational bonds with Tamils in Sri Lanka galvanized a section of political activists, journalists, students and IT professionals to gather and mobilize in an attempt to disseminate information regarding the situation in Eelam to the people of Tamilnadu. Simultaneously they wanted to demonstrate to the Indian and Sri Lankan governments and the world, that Tamils in Tamilnadu would not remain silent while massacres were being perpetrated in Eelam.

With the last war in Sri Lanka a nationalist upheaval reemerged in Tamilnadu, as the state had largely remained politically latent in terms of nationalist politics throughout much of the 1990s and 2000s. The crackdown in the aftermath of the Rajiv assassination in 1991 had succeeded in quelling the fledgling solidarity among students, activists, politicians and literary circles in the state during the latter part of the 1980s (Paus 2005). During the intensified war in Eelam throughout this period, public interest and solidarity among students towards the Eelam Tamil struggle was limited.

Nascent Stages of the Solidarity Movement

In this section the interlocutors' point of view and life-world, experiences and memory will aid me in presenting a chronological and descriptive account of the reemergence of solidarity for Eelam and the growth of the contemporary social movement. Alfred Shutz (1997) reminds us that to understand identity formations, one needs to account for subjective conceptions of the world or life-world of the individuals in question. Similarly, it is also necessary to account for the historical, political and cultural formations which make up the context in which such subjective formulations are situated.

Kumar, narrated his early days in the solidarity movement and illuminated the ad hoc mobilization which took place in public and private venues. The virtual venue became increasingly significant from 2012/2013 following the decisive entrance of students into the agitation and today constitutes a significant component of the Eelam solidarity movement. Once during a meeting with Kumar, as we walked past the life size Gandhi statue on Marina Beach, he stopped, looked up and said, "It all began here". He subsequently narrated the initial stages of his participation in the agitation; Kumar had been one of the founders of a prominent organization within the larger Eelam solidarity movement. He explained that alongside colleagues in the IT sector he would follow the unfolding events in Eelam through Eelam Tamil websites as the war progressed in December 2008. Kumar explained that as IT

workers spent most of their day inside IT complexes and rarely have time to be outdoors, innovation was required. They began by approaching and gathering people from cafeterias, office buildings, the grounds etc. within the IT complexes to discuss, create awareness and urge action on behalf of Eelam. Kumar told me how the criminalization of the LTTE and politics of Eelam rendered many IT workers fearful of involvement. Such a process of criminalization had been rampant since the 1990s (Paus 2005). He also mentioned that many of the IT workers were from rural regions, where their families remained dependent on their income. This also added a factor of risk and security for the newly migrated IT workers, preventing them from political engagement. He told me with regret that many were dissuaded by their family for these very reasons. Kumar as well as other veteran interlocutors would stress that during early 2009 there was no organizational infrastructure for Eelam solidarity in the state for those of the 'public', such as Kumar who wished to engage.

Frustrated and angered at the killings of Tamils by the Sri Lankan state and the inaction in Tamilnadu, Kumar's group would gather at night in random places, such as someone's hostel or at cafes and eateries, to discuss the situation and express their feelings and urge to act. As the number of meetings increased, they ultimately decided to take action and mobilize a protest, "to show India, Sri Lanka and the outside world", that Tamils in Tamilnadu would not stand idle as their "kin across the sea were being oppressed and massacred".

. Before the fieldtrip I assumed that the rapid dissemination of information through Eelam Tamil diaspora based radio, TV and internet also made information readily available to Tamilnadu. It was perhaps the only source of information from within the war zone, as the Sri Lankan state had throughout the war prohibited free media access to the war zone. This enabled the government to control the flow of information. Despite their efforts, pictures, videos, telephone conversations and news continued to spread through Tamil sources to the diaspora. It was only in conversations and interviews with my interlocutors, in particular the veteran branch such as Kumar, Xavier and Selvan that it transpired that the incumbent party in Tamilnadu at the time, had ensured that Indian Tamil media in Tamilnadu did not cover the unfolding events in Eelam. The DMK, at the time state ally of the ruling party at Centre, the INC, allegedly enforced a blockade in the Indian Tamil media during Mulli'vaykal. The DMK was accused by activists of caving in to New Delhi and in assisting the Indian government in containing the solidarity for Eelam through media censorship and police harassment.

This resulted in only Indian national English media reporting the events to the public

albeit in a manner as stressed by the activists, favorable to the Sri Lankan government. The war was termed in accordance with Sri Lankan state narrations as a ‘war against terrorism’ and they reproduced the government’s claims of zero civilian casualties. The activists told me that the footage emanating from Eelam based websites were omitted in the Indian national and Tamilnadu state media.

Kumar and his colleagues then decided to mobilize a human chain protest, which marked the first large demonstration against the war in Eelam to be mobilized in Chennai. Accordingly Kumar and several hundreds of IT workers, professionals and political activists organized a human chain stretching across the IT corridor in the Southern reaches of the city. Kumar told me that they had attempted to ensure participation of famous Tamil cinema actors, in order to reach a larger public in Tamilnadu; however they were deeply disappointed by the lack of response from the film actors.

A Series of Critical Events

The course of the agitation in Tamilnadu consisted of a succession of events, with international, regional, national and transnational dimensions. While Jackson (2005) focuses on storytelling and the relationship between events, narratives and interpretations, I will orient my analytic optic, towards the role of events in shaping political thoughts, actions, identity, narratives and interpretations. This is inspired from Veena Das’s book ‘Critical Events (1997), in which events are described as central in the shaping of identity, social and political relations and history in modern India. There are several events which shape the outcome of the overall agitation as well as individual activists’ or their organization’s narration, discourse and action. I will define these decisive events as critical events, as they prove integral in molding social actions, interpretation and narration. My interlocutors would repine that they were reacting and organizing demonstrations to events determined by external factors such as the UN or the Sri Lankan or Indian government, whereas they aspired for pro-active demonstrations.

In the analysis of the agitation, I have classified events in accordance with the life-world and categorization of my interlocutors. In my research I have retained an overall focus on critical events to analyze the political engagement for Eelam through a series of events which proved influential in informing and molding the perceptions and actions of the

interlocutors themselves. I have also arranged them chronologically to illuminate and discuss the development and dynamics of the solidarity movement.

The events associated with the war in Mulli'vaykal formed the basis for solidarity in Tamilnadu. A major concern for the activists is to secure political rights for Tamils in Sri Lanka and to punish the perpetrators of the atrocities which occurred. In this regard Mulli'vaykal is omnipresent in the agitation. I will thus not conceptualize Mulli'vaykal as a critical event, but rather as a *centrifugal event*; it proved most decisive in forming discourse, action and thoughts among the activists in the social phenomenon I studied.

Muttukumar's self-immolation was ostensibly understood by activists themselves as the event which prompted a section of people in Chennai to become the core of the Eelam-solidarity movement. Kumar, Selvan, Perumal, Mr. S and Xavier could be categorized as belonging to this early core group. I will thus categorize Muttukumar's self-immolation as the first critical event as it was also understood by all my interlocutors as significant in galvanizing political activism in Tamilnadu. Marcus and Pachai pointed out to me that Muttukumar's death was distorted through state media, which narrated it as a love affair related suicide. This reflects the state authority's attempt at distracting the public's attention and containing growing sentiments in favor of Eelam Tamils. Marcus explained how this accentuated the anti DMK/Congress sentiment in Tamilnadu. Kumar's insights regarding the burgeoning period of the agitation for Eelam is informative. The public dimension of Muttukumar's death and funeral, and the call to action in his letter is mentioned without exception by my interlocutors as the factors bringing about popular protest. Marcus, Pachai and Theodore also proudly told me of an almost iconized incident regarding Muttukumar and the politics of Tamilness he espoused. When he was lying in the hospital bed and close to succumbing to his extensive burn injuries, the staff asked him to reveal his *jati*/caste for bureaucratic purposes. My interlocutors claimed that Muttukumar had replied saying, "*Tamil is my jati.*", reflecting an egalitarian ethos of the contemporary Tamil nationalism. I was told that following his death a number of people in homage to his sacrifice, formed associations and actively started politically engaging towards Eelam, with a primary focus on halting the genocide. This group alongside students took charge of Muttukumar's politicized funeral procession. The commemoration of Muttukumar was in the following years a central event observed by various organizations in the solidarity movement as well as several Tamil political parties. This commemoration event was central in producing further discourse and spreading the political ideas of the solidarity movement to the people.

I analytically categorize the conclusion of the massacres in Mulli'vaykal as forming

the second critical event. My interlocutors stated that it resulted in politically active Tamils in India realizing that they did not hold sufficient political power to prevent such a humanitarian catastrophe. The radicalization was evident in the proliferation of demonstrations, protests and discourses condemning the Sri Lankan government and by extension the congenial relationship the Indian state maintained with the former. In conversations Kumar, Xavier and Senthil stated that a collective guilt was felt by Tamilnadu Tamils when proven unable to prevent “injustice upon a kindred ethnic nation”. In separate dialogue with my younger interlocutors they would also lament that they felt and still feel guilt regarding Mulli’vaykal. As mentioned the cultural connectedness, territorial and linguistic proximity and the shock and trauma of Mulli’vaykal formed the environment for activists to emotionally react, politically mobilize and through nationalist idioms and metaphoric kinship terms communicate to the general public, Tamil sentiments and the need to protest. This is a process described by anthropologists when denoting metaphoric kinship in the expression of ethnic identity (Nash 1988; Yelvington 1991). Scholars of anthropology have also argued that ethnicity and nationalism gains more importance among social movements during time of turmoil, transformations, in response to modernization or the incorporation into larger political unions (Eriksen 2002). What is particular in the case of Tamilnadu Tamils, is that their contemporary nationalist orientations were catalyzed by transformation, yet their political engagement concerned an event of traumatic nature which directly affected the Tamils in Sri Lanka, technically another nation and citizens of another country.

The electoral victory of the DMK in the state and its coalition partner the Congress Party in the Center in the immediate aftermath of Mulli’vaykal provided the activists with an incentive to plan and organize their agitation and advocacy for Eelam with further persistence. The electoral victory was considered by my interlocutors as another event which proved decisive in the early phases of the agitation which I will categorize as the third critical event. Marcus and Perumal said the DMK/Congress electoral victory, came as a shock and caused disillusionment for the activists. Despite this they realized the necessity to politicize and organize the people all the more. This led to heightened determination among the activists to build an agitation to oppose the DMK/Congress alliance which they held directly accountable for failing to prevent Mulli’vaykal.

In social movement analysis, precipitating factors, structural strain, or structural conduciveness were analytical tools coined by Neil Smelser (1962) to illuminate conditions which facilitate new forms of collective behaviour and political mobilization. Accordingly, the critical events illuminated above and below provided the catalysts which

functioned as precipitating factors facilitating the solidarity for Eelam and nationalist sentiments to pervade in Taminadu. The inability of the activists and solidary people to prevent the war could be approached as ‘structural strain’ which led to activists succeeding in organizing collective behaviour among the students and other sections of the Tamilnadu populations. The ethnic-cultural aspects of the solidarity for Eelam, the role of cultural traits and metaphoric kinship terms could be argued as constituting socio-cultural constellations or structural conduciveness by Smelser, making possible political mobilization based on nationalist sentiments towards the Tamils of Eelam. Such dynamics between structural factors, critical events, international politics, nationalism and ethnic sentiments resulted in a upsurge among the people of Tamilnadu towards engaging between and betwixt nationalism and transnationalism for their ‘ethnic kin’ in Sri Lanka.

Student ‘uprising’ and the Balachandran Photograph

My fieldwork was conducted in the aftermath of the 2013 ‘student uprising’ among Tamils in Tamilnadu in solidarity with Eelam. In order to account for this period between 2013 and 2014 I will analyze several critical events in the given duration. This period was frequently referred to by my interlocutors in conversations regarding their political engagement and proved to retain an omnipresent experience for Tamil activists.

The UNHRC process citing human rights violations in Sri Lanka which has been in motion since 2009 has been a centrifugal reference for demonstrations and political discourse concerning Eelam in Tamilnadu, Eelam and the diaspora. In 2013, the UNHRC 24th session coincided with the British Channel 4 News release of several photographs of LTTE leader’s son Balachandran, which shows him first held in captivity by Sri Lankan army personnel, then later lying dead on the ground with multiple bullet wounds to his chest. The 12-year-old had been executed by Lankan army personnel. The release of the photograph caused upheaval among the people and political activists in Tamilnadu. Large scale protests also commenced in all major cities of Taminadu, which proceeded to spread to rural regions. Velan, an activist from the moderate camp proudly told me that as a response to the release of the Balachandran photos, the people in his native village in the Northern districts of Tamilnadu had conducted road blocks and hunger protests in solidarity with student activists demanding justice for Eelam. He stressed how this was a spontaneous and emotional reaction from the general public in his village and was organized from the local grass root level. He and many activists stressed the large scale public participation in the Eelam agitation in mid-2013 and all the interlocutors explicitly described the release of the photos as the main catalyst.

Tens of thousands of people from various sections of the Tamilnadu population, in villages, rural towns and major cities gathered collectively to protest against the killing of Balachandran. Mass reproduction and distribution of the photos and portraits of Balachandran was evident in posters, flyers, pamphlets, newspapers, television, and social media. Marcus, Pasupathi, Kumar and Pachai would tell me in anger how the news and photos of the son of the Tamil rebel leader appalled the general public. I was told the photographs “made people think it could have been their own children or little brother.” Marcus also relayed that the face of Balachandran haunted him and many students who were “burning to do something” and protest such injustice. “I could not sleep for days, nor concentrate on my studies after seeing the photos”. He further mentioned that the photographs and evidence of Balanchandran’s execution reminded them of the fate of the tens of thousands of Tamils who were either massacred or interned by the same army. My interlocutors would illuminate that the photographs were considered sound evidence of the direct and intentional involvement of the army in killing Tamil civilians. The release of Balachandran photographs is also considered a critical event, which bore influence on students in particular, and elicited stronger political engagement towards Eelam solidarity. Marcus and the others reiterated how students increasingly boycotted classes and organized spontaneous protests at universities in support of Eelam and also towards the solidarity movement which advocated Eelam on the streets of Tamilnadu.

The photographs were released ahead of the 24th UNHRC session, escalating the agitation demanding the UN to sanction an international investigation into Sri Lanka, carry out a referendum on independent Eelam and implement economic embargo on Sri Lanka. For those wanted to engage for Eelam Tamils at this point, particularly the student community, there were existing platforms of protests for them to partake in. Based on my interlocutors’ observations and complemented with news reports, the critical events described below proved decisive in plunging students of Tamilnadu into agitation.

The Student Agitation and Loyala Hunger Strike

On 8th March, eight students at the reputed Loyola College, previously known for its apolitical character, embarked on an indefinite hunger strike demanding the implementation of a seven point charter including the call for a referendum on Eelam, an international investigation and economic embargo against Sri Lanka. The charter reflected the demands propagated by the various formations who had jointly intensified their respective agitations as response to the release of the Channel 4 video and the upcoming UNHRC session. The students were also in conflict with the U.S. sponsored UNHRC resolution which fell short of their demands due to its non-interventionist nature and soon the protest was directed at the resolution itself. The hunger strike drew considerable media and social media attention and the news spread among students in other educational institutions. Soon several students in various universities and colleges staged protests in solidarity with the Loyola hunger strike and Eelam. A general pattern in previous student engagement in the agitation had been that they predominantly hailed from arts and law faculties or colleges. A significant change occurred with the hunger strike, as students from medical, engineering and IT faculties and institutions throughout the state boycotted classes and took to the streets in protest for Eelam. Xavier, Kumar and Marcus also underscored this dimension of the student engagement in 2013. MSS Pandian (2013) in an article elucidates the significance of the hunger strike and the Balachandran photographs in what became an unprecedented student agitation:

“The protest in which young men and women participated in equal strength took varied forms – posters and pamphlets, hunger strikes, processions, human-chains, effigy-burning, rail and road rokos, and siege of Central government offices... It is not the pictures of Pirabahakaran but the poignant images of Balachandran before and after his killing were the ones which mobilised the students, children, and indeed the wider public.”

Pandian also denotes the intersection of the Periyarite political tradition in the political engagement for Eelam among the students who were agitating in the streets:

“Also, the black shirt, a polyvalent symbol of Tamils’ degradation introduced by Periyar E V Ramsamy among his cadres during the days of the Self-Respect Movement, was ubiquitous in student protests. The newness of the protest did not, thus, abandon all past inheritances.”

The student agitation and the public support for the protests in solidarity with Eelam in this period of 2013 were reported as the widest in the state since the popular anti-Hindi agitation of 1965. An estimated 200 000 students and an even larger number of the ‘public’ were believed to have participated in the demonstrations which lasted for weeks (Pandian 2013). The popular agitation was historic and also a central reference point for the student activists of the present. It spread throughout the major cities and towns of the state, drawing people from various walks of life in the tens of thousands displaying solidarity with the Eelam solidarity movement (Tamilnet 2013a). For those engaged, these incidents were thus both a source of pride and faith as well as cause for frustration and despair. The phenomenon seemingly raised the expectations concerning popular participation among many activists. In disappointment, many of my interlocutors would compare the 2013 upheaval with the reduced participation witnessed during the period of my fieldwork, although they remarked that student participation was now more independent and frequent than before 2013. The students had now become an integral portion of the Eelam solidarity movement. During the course of the release of Balachandran photographs and the UNHRC 24th session, dozens of student organizations were formed all which advocated the politics of Eelam and were in support of other pro-Eelam organizations in Tamilnadu. One student organization was named after Balachandran, reflecting the impact of the photographs on Tamil student activists. The words of Paran, illuminate the activists own reflections and experience during this period of unprecedented political activity.

“The March 2013 student uprising was an independent uprising, not orchestrated by any established force. Throughout Tamilnadu lakhs of students were agitating, almost in every college there was participation. There were more colleges participant than not. Throughout Tamilnadu, this unarvu (emotion/sentiment) proved immediate in becoming a student uprising following the release of Balachandran’s photo. After 1983, this was the first student uprising in solidarity with Eelam and in this uprising, most students were participant.....if they were made to engage with the politics of the uprising in one bulk, I would say they were not. It was not possible. There was a proliferation of organizations representing the angered students, and then you also have many students who did not show interest in participating in more than one or two demonstrations.it is due to the fact that they were angered and emotional but ...they had not been educated politically. Political observers, and those students who know the history of the Eelam struggle, why we are struggling, towards what are we

struggling, whom are we agitating against and creating pressure on, those who know all this, they stay active in the agitation till this very day.

If such an upheaval will be possible again, it would of course be possible under the proper situation. Even if it is merely those students who are in the forefront who are active throughout, and even though there are only 500 students who participate from each organization, I believe that we will be able to mobilize once again an upheaval of which lakhs of students will be participant.

We are thus torch bearers; in the present situation we create awareness among the students and the people. We are educating them to understand with clarity the politics of Eelam.”

Paran’s insight into the effects of the student upheaval and the dynamics of the solidarity movement discern that 2013 marked the decisive entrance of students into the politics.

Boycott of National Parties

The Tamilnadu activists frequently juxtaposed Indianess with Tamilness during demonstrations against Indo-Lanka relations. The Indian state was rhetorically questioned by the activists on a placard stating, ‘Choose Tamilnadu or Colombo’, held in a demonstration against the invitation of President Rajapakse to attend the inauguration ceremony for the newly elected Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi in New Delhi. As reflected in social media, the decision to invite Rajapakse disappointed Tamilnadu and Eelam Tamils who had hoped that a new PM in India would take a stand against human rights violations in Sri Lanka. The demonstrations were a Tamilnadu based engagement and part of the student campaign to boycott the Bharata Janata Party (BJP) in the state assembly election in April 2014. The BJP and the Congress are the two dominant India national parties.

The boycott of the BJP in the state elections followed a five year boycott of the Congress party by Tamil activists in Tamilnadu in the aftermath of the Mulli’vaykal. Consequently following the 2010 elections, the Congress Party was decimated in the legislative assembly of Tamilnadu. Previously Congress support at state level would determine the majority between the DMK and the ADMK led fronts who dominated the electoral politics of the state. Paran and Marcus explained that the Congress’s downfall left a vacuum which the BJP attempted to capitalize on. Reflecting the thoughts of many student activists, Marcus and Paran feared that the BJP and its brand of Indian/Hindu nationalism would gain foothold in the state. Citing the ‘Sri Lankan Tamil issue’ the BJP sought to woo

Tamil voters by reference to the discontent against the Congress and the Sri Lankan government, yet as pointed out by the activists, without changing the Indian foreign policy regarding Sri Lanka. Consequently the student activists presented the BJP leader in Tamilnadu with a memorandum which called for clarification of the BJP's stand on a referendum for independent Eelam, to recognize Tamil genocide, and to support international investigations into atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan armed forces. The ultimatum was set for forty-eight hours, and if the BJP failed to address the demands, the students pledged to boycott the BJP campaign in Tamilnadu during the then upcoming elections.

The BJP leadership responded within forty-eight hours, but categorically denied what the students demanded. Paran, who was the leader of a prominent student organization, told me that he had not expected them to do otherwise, but was surprised that the party responded with an official statement. Subsequently the students campaigned against the BJP in several cities in the state with the most intense campaigning in Chennai. A group of 20 students went on a state-wide boycott campaign on motorbikes, covering some of the main cities in North, Central and Southern Tamilnadu. Pamphlets, posters and flyers which denounced the BJP and cited its negative stand regarding Eelam were circulated in both virtual and public spaces.

Some of my interlocutors also conducted a door to door campaign in working class areas of Southern Chennai ahead of the voting day. The student activists involved used the traditional drum, the *parai* to communicate their messages explaining the stand of the BJP regarding Eelam and the dangers of the neo-liberal developmental paradigm of the BJP. The activists were using a traditional Tamil form of public message through the *parai* associated with lower and Dalit castes. The use of *parai* in political protests in modern Tamilnadu is a practice upheld in Dalit and Tamil nationalist traditions, and my interlocutors would refer to *parai* in reference to its antiquity and Tamilness. In line with Periyarite philosophy they all rejected Brahmanical and caste Hindu categorizations of the instrument as impure and associated with death.

After the decision to invite president Rajapakse to PM Narendra Modi's inauguration ceremony, the students responded by staging a united protest on May 24th. The protest also became the first demonstration against the ascending regime; in fact the activists were protesting the new government before it had officially stepped into office. The demonstration was staged in front of BJP state headquarters in central Chennai, by the various constituencies of the student movement for Eelam who joined together in condemning the new government. I was present with two of my interlocutors who were participants in the protests, marked by notable police presence. The student activists called the invitation of the

Sri Lankan president “the arrogance of the centre in overriding the democratic will of the Tamilnadu people” and stated that their united protests were a ‘symbolic siege’ of the BJP office. It is evident that the Central government’s actions in favour of the Lankan state are understood by activists as against Eelam and consequently the democratic will of the Tamilnadu people. The interlocutors explained the stand for Eelam as popular sentiment in Tamilnadu by referring the three resolutions passed by the Tamilnadu state legislative assembly in support of Eelam Tamils.

Practicing Tamilness

Activists representing the radical camp also staged a small protest outside the residence of Tamil cinema icon Rajnikanth, who had publically endorsed the BJP by supporting Modi’s election campaign. They threatened the actor with a boycott campaign targeting his films, if he was to attend the inauguration ceremony of the new Prime Minister. Such actions, I was told, were considered unthinkable before Mullu’vaykal, as Rajnikanth enjoyed an almost unprecedented celebrity status among the masses of Tamilnadu.

Many of my interlocutors would elaborate on how Tamil cinema, filled with populist themes of entertainment covering heroism, romanticism, action, comedy and music, had effectively contributed to rendering the student community in Tamilnadu largely apolitical in terms of engagement towards social-political issues. The politics for Eelam had re-ignited political awareness and student activism; without exception, Marcus, Pasupathi, Roosevelt, Paran, Selvan, Theodore, and Kumar would corroborate the radical effect of Mullu’vaykal on Tamilnadu. Yet historically Tamil cinema had during the heyday of the Dravidian movement been a favoured medium of communication for the DMK in the dissemination of political ideas, conceptions and nationalist sentiments among the people. This had contributed to the popularity of a form of Tamil nationalism fronted by C.N. Annadurai, Karunanidhi and most poignantly MGR who was formerly a popular cinema icon.

Jesuthas, an activist in his early thirties from the Southern districts of the state and associated with the radical camp, illuminated how Mulli’vaykal and the agitation for Eelam had changed Tamilnadu Tamils’ perception of identity and their relation to popular Tamil-cinema. He sarcastically explained that in a state known to worship cinema icons with religious fervour, popularizing discourse with critical interpretation of the cinema industry or political engagement towards socio-political issues was considered impossible. Similar views were also expressed by Selvan, Kumar and Xavier on several occasions. “It was Mulli’vaykal and the solidarity movement which spread Tamil political consciousness among the people,

now they are able to confront even Rajnikanth, questioning his allegiance to Tamilnadu”, Jesuthas explained to me during a demonstration.

Tamil nationalist narratives are disseminated among Tamilnadu youth through the political engagement for Eelam, subsequently influencing public opinion with transformative effects within the socio-political landscape of Tamilnadu. Likewise the activists dichotomized the Indian state and its identity with Tamil identity and Tamilness. On the 26th of May a few movements including a Dravidian organization, participated in yet another demonstration against the inauguration ceremony. These protests took place in two phases: first phase was mobilized by exclusively Eelam solidarity organisations, and the second phase was headed by a Dravidian/Periyarite organization with close ties to Eelam solidarity in Tamilnadu. In the first demonstration, several activists held placards which read in English “Mr Modi, you choose Chennai or Colombo, you can’t have both”, and shouted repeatedly in Tamil “We condemn the Modi government and the Indian state which invites genocidal Rajapakse onto Indian soil”. The students involved in the demonstration, courted arrest and were detained by the police. Due to repeated detainment, the activists seemed to have ritualised this interaction with state authorities as part of their protests.

The anti-BJP campaign among the students, I was told by activists, was a reaction and an attempt to deconstruct discourses on the BJP’s ‘development model’ circulated in social and national media as part of the election campaign. According to the student activists the anti-Eelam stand of BJP, Hindutva ideology, the Hindi centred national project prompted the anti-BJP discourse in the Southern Indian state as corroborated by pamphlets, social media writings, and posters produced by the activists.

Both the dominant Indian national parties have been explicitly condemned and perceived as anti-Tamil in Tamilnadu. My interlocutors condemned the national parties for practicing or supporting policies and actions detrimental to Tamils in general and Eelam in particular. Such a situation has several implications: Indian nationality or what is propagated as Indian national interests is deemed by activists in Tamilnadu as problematic regarding Tamilness and as antithetical to Eelam. Moreover transnational bonds with Eelam and the prevalence of Tamil centred sentiments seem to overarch Indian state/nation oriented identification and allegiance among a substantial and influential portion of the Tamilnadu polity. The popular political engagement revitalizes Tamil political identity and subsequently the imagined community of Tamilnadu Tamils is re-imagined. The political mobilization and discourses I observed exhibited strong national character, referring to Tamils as an *inam* (ethnicity) and *tesam* (nation), terms which were interwoven with the established traditions of

Dravidian and Tamil nationalism in Tamilnadu and Eelam. Of significance is that such a *revitalized* national consciousness for Tamilnadu Tamils was made possible through the transnational political engagement towards Eelam.

The Eelam solidarity movement has manifested itself as a force capable of affecting political reality in Tamilnadu with implications for the Central government. The marginalization of both national parties placed the ADMK in a position of dominance within the state and vis a vis the Centre. Important to note is also the extent of accommodation by the Tamilnadu government of the solidarity movements' demands through state assembly resolution passed under the previous Tamilnadu CM and ADMK leader Jayalalitha.

Conclusion

I have in this chapter given a chronological account of the development of the contemporary political engagement in Tamilnadu concerning human rights and political justice for Eelam. I have so far outlined the contextual layers, illuminated a series of critical events and given a historical account of the agitation for Eelam in Tamilnadu. The interlocutors' own words have assisted in embodying the political engagement as well in illuminating its content with insight. On a cosmological, ideological and cultural-historical level, the agitation is informed by ideas centred on Tamilness and radical nationalist political traditions in the Tamil region. Alongside the concern for Eelam, other political ideas were also interwoven into the political engagement of activists in Tamilnadu. Tamil nationalism as observed during my fieldwork, was manifest in its multiplicity. In order to grasp this argument I will in the following chapter, focus on the various streams of political ideas and actions which are interwoven into Tamil national orientations of my interlocutors.

Chapter 5

The Multiple Faces of Tamil Nationalism

There are multiple streams of political ideas and traditions at play in the constitution of the political narratives of the Eelam-solidarity movement and the concerned political engagement. In this chapter I will address the multifaceted aspects of Tamil political consciousness articulated through actions and opinions of the activists. I will illustrate how political traditions of environmentalist concerns, linguistic nationalism, and anti-imperialism are intertwined in the political engagement of Tamil activists through empirical data and ethnographical accounts. The above mentioned socio-economic and political issues are combined with their solidarity towards Eelam. These various strands are situated within the grand narrative of Tamil nationalism as manifest in the agitations in Chennai.

Political consciousness

I will use the term *political consciousness* to denote the assembly of political ideas and markers of identity constituted and articulated through the solidarity movement. The concept of ideology as conceived by Gramsci is fruitful in conceptualizing the political ideas and goals which are assembled through the social actions of the Eelam-solidarity movement. These assembled political ideas are centrifuged by references to Tamilness and are oriented towards political action for the Tamil collective, whether local grievances in Tamilnadu or Eelam.

Ideology is approached by Gramsci as a conception of the world and a practical activity consciously organized by a collective or a class of people to serve their ‘organic’ interests (Gramsci 1971:323-34). Beyond the domain of ideas, beliefs and conceptions, it also involves the cultural aspect and social practice of individuals manifested in art and collective life towards “...preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc which that ideology, serves to cement and unify”(Gramsci 1971:328). Among my interlocutors this form of ideology building is in its inception and is expressed and consolidated through social and political actions manifested by activists in their engagement towards Eelam.

Despite the coherence of political ideas associated with Tamilness or Tamil identity there is no single centralized organizational basis or manifesto standardizing its ideology. I

will use political consciousness and Tamilness interchangeably to denote the political ideology in the making of the Eelam-Tamil solidarity movement in Chennai. The political engagement towards Eelam incorporates several established political traditions under a shared banner of Tamil political identity and political consciousness. The political engagement towards Eelam associates and combines various political ideas and traditions with references to Tamilness. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the political identity proposed by the solidarity movement, previous markers of caste, class, region and religion are neglected; instead an apparently egalitarian political culture is cultivated based on common Tamilness and Tamil identity.

The discourses, political ideas, and motivations as expressed among my interlocutors, the agitating activists, in the literature they produced and in the demands put forth, illuminated that a political identity of Tamilness was central to a Tamil political ideology. However besides Eelam, various locally cultivated political traditions formed a basis for the Tamil identity propagated by the activists. These denoted Left-wing Tamil nationalism, the ideals of E.V.R. Periyar and to some extent B.A. Ambedkar. All three political traditions operated with a historical focus on anti-casteism/anti-Brahmanism and the Aryan-Dravidian binary. Periyarism and Tamil left-nationalism prove to be more influential among the activists I studied, and Ambedkarism is interwoven into the former two.

Tamil Linguistic Nationalism

The Tamil nationalist movement in Tamilnadu ran parallel to and often aligned with the Dravidian movement; that which differentiated them despite their commonality was the strong nationalist orientation of the former. Moreover atheist orientations of the Dravidian Periyarite organization led them to work against the religious dominance among the Tamils. Despite tension with Tamil nationalists, both the movements overlapped in terms of opposition to Brahmanism, the dominance of the Indian Central government and Hindi imposition. Tamil nationalists were grounded on a Tamil linguistic nation and promoted language, history, literature and what they conceived as Tamil religion-folk culture. Tamil nationalists and Periyarites found common ground in that they both regarded Tamils/Dravidians as indigenous opposed to Indo-Aryans, and both movements displayed an autochthonous dimension to their political ideology. As evident during the anti-Hindi agitation of 1965 Dravidian organizations such as the DK and Tamil nationalist parties such as the DMK alongside student movements jointly mobilized political action and influenced Tamil activism. Yet the idea of Tamilness or Dravidianess proved conflicting and there are a

range of internal discourses relating to this conflict which is beyond the scope of my research. Despite Periyar's friction with Tamil nationalists over the glorification of the Tamil language by the latter, he considered Tamils to be a nation and the language as a vehicle for the empowerment of the masses.

What is interesting is rather how the contemporary Eelam-solidarity movement has interwoven influences from these political traditions without much apparent conflict under the banner of Tamilness and Eelam.

One particular demonstration I observed focused entirely on the status of Tamil language. It protested a move by the state government to transform Tamil-medium government schools into English-medium. The protestors demanded an immediate halt to such plans, and they chanted commemorative salutes to “the martyrs of the anti-Hindi agitation of 1965”. In this demonstration, activists from both radical and moderate camps displayed conjunction between Eelam solidarity and Tamilnadu nationalism. Alongside them were traditionally clad veteran (see picture) male Tamil nationalist activists. There were also several school children present accompanied by their mothers. The speeches denounced the move as an attack on Tamil language implemented with the intention of converting English-medium schools into private enterprises for the advancement of the English educated Brahmanical section. Tamil nationalists view ‘Brahmanical forces’ (See chapter 6) in constant conflict with the general interests of the Tamil masses. Privatization and Anglicization of public vernacular education is viewed by the protestors as an attack by upper caste and classes on the “well-being of Tamil”.



Periyarism

My interaction with the interlocutors illuminated the widespread influence of E.V. Ramaswamy (Periyar) and the Dravidian movement. Periyar (1879-1973) had a long and prolific activist life, in which he produced vast literature and propagated numerous agitations in the pursuit of progressive ideals. He was as mentioned, the propagator of the influential Self-Respect movement and the founder of the DK. His movement, activism, works and political philosophy are centred on rationalism, atheism, anti-caste, gender equality, Dravidian nationalism and anti-Brahmanism.

Paran, Marcus, Kumar, Theodore, Selvan, Velan, Pasupathi, and Roosevelt were chief among the activists who pointed out Periyar's role in their political constitution. Marcus, Paran and Kumar would point out how his writings were instrumental in casting light on processes of Brahmanization and caste. Periyarites were also respected due to campaigns mobilized towards the eradication of caste and religion. Although public participation waned, Periyar and his movement retained zeal until the early 1970s, continuing to exert influence on students and young activists.

During the 1980s, events in Eelam revitalized Tamil nationalist activism and politics in Tamilnadu. The dynamics of the national liberation struggle by Tamil Eelam youths, and the subsequent oppression perpetuated by the Sri Lankan state had manifold ramifications in Tamilnadu.

With clandestine Tamilnadu state government support, various Eelam Tamil militants flooded into Tamilnadu, for political work, organizing solidarity and receiving armed training and finance. This brought radical sections of Tamilnadu youth, organizations and the intelligentsia into contact with Eelam Tamil militants. This ensured a direct transmission and dissemination of information from Eelam and their struggle to Tamilnadu. Strong public support for Eelam was beginning to manifest in Tamilnadu, as political activists and intellectuals displayed their solidarity to the Eelam struggle.

The present day offshoots of the DK have since the 1980s been adapting Tamil nationalism and have also endorsed the LTTE and other Eelam liberation movements. Selvan expressed that Periyar's last speech in 1973 expressed that the foremost social question for Tamilnadu was secession, and in its aftermath influenced a new generation of radical Tamil

youths with a predilection towards Marxist-Leninism into a Tamil nationalist orientation. Although Periyar was ambivalent in his attitude to Tamil nationalism, often speaking of a common Dravidian mobilization, he was firm in his belief in the need for a nationalist awakening among Tamils.

“...We must demand the government to amend the Constitution suitably. If the government is not prepared to do so we will ask what relationship we have with the government. In whose government are we citizen? The next stage is to force the government to quit. Our rulers are thousands of miles away. We cannot understand their language. They cannot understand what we say. Their manners are different. Their civilization is different. Their culture is different. ... If Tamilnadu becomes free and independent, the longevity of our people would increase... We will be able to progress in all fields”. (Periyar 1983)

Periyar stipulated an ultimatum to the Indian government demanding the constitution be amended so caste is abolished and the logic of varnasrama-dharma eliminated. He condemned the continued official usage of the term ‘Shudra’ derived from the varnasrama-dharma logic of Vedic literature which classifies Tamils and Dravidians as the lower of the four tiered varna system proscribed for Aryan ruled society. Periyar explicated the multifaceted differences between the rulers in New Delhi and the ruled Tamils and implied the need for secession.

Selvan explained that following the above mention speech, Periyar passed away in 1973 and his successor to the leadership of the DK prompted a section of the youth followers to quit due to the moderate policies of the new leader. The collusion with political orientations from Eelam brought forth an alternative for the disillusioned youth in the Dravidian movement in the aftermath of Periyar’s death. The radicalized youth with inspiration from Eelam militants spearheaded the creation of various Marxist-Leninist and Periyarite formations with a strong Tamil nationalist outlook in Tamilnadu.

The contemporary solidarity movement constitutes a continuity of this particular line of Tamil nationalism, yet alongside a larger aggregation of Tamil political orientations.

Ambedkarism

The philosophy of B.A. Ambedkar is peripheral in the political engagement of my interlocutors. It is primarily a Dalit oriented political ideology in which the eradication of untouchability, the struggle against casteism and equal rights and welfare for the Dalits are central.

In Tamilnadu, Ambedkarism at various points intersects with the anti-caste/anti-Brahmanical branches of established Tamil nationalist and Dravidian traditions. Moreover Ambedkar's political ideology was in turn shaped by the works of Jyotirao Phule who in the latter portion of the 19th century founded the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra and advocated non-Brahmin/Dravidian unity against Aryan/Brahmin domination (Omvedt 2004). The Aryan-Dravidian binary and anti-Brahmanism developed simultaneously in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu, providing the grounds for mutual influence and syncretism. Thus Tamil nationalist, Periyarite and Ambedkarite political orientations were also intersected in informing political engagement in Tamilnadu.

The most vivid embodiment of this is the VCK party, or the Dalit Panthers who are renowned for their support of the LTTE and Eelam. The VCK is Tamil nationalist in its orientation, and uses 'pure' Tamil, which denotes speaking in non-sanskritized or anglicized Tamil as evident in its leader's nom du guerre Thirumavalan which stems from the Sangam period of Tamil names. A VCK party conference I observed also played LTTE patriotic songs with a large portrait of the LTTE leader Pirapakaran. The VCK also used the tiger insignia of the LTTE and other symbols of Eelam in their propaganda as seen on wall posters, placards, pamphlets and stage installations. VCK has in fact made itself a visible component of the political party dimension of the Eelam solidarity movement.

The adulation of the LTTE has also recently been transformed into a populist phenomenon, wherein political parties appropriate the politics of Eelam, centred on the advocacy of the political independence of Eelam Tamils. The activists claimed that this was pursued by political parties mainly due to the popularity of Eelam-solidarity waged by the independent youth movement. Consequently many political parties express their support for the youth activists. They also use the language of Eelam solidarity in their party politics and during electoral campaigns. Beyond its populist appeal, the Eelam dimension brings a character of national integration in the sense that Eelam provides a common platform of engagement based on Tamilness and progressive ideals.

In terms of caste eradication, the members within the moderate camp underlined it as a part of the political programme of their movement. This was reflected in protests against caste violence in the state by various student organizations. Nevertheless both camps professed caste to be a social evil and detrimental to a contemporary and progressive Tamil nationalism. The LTTE's anti-caste stand was also influential among the activists and was often cited. The frequent references to the LTTE by nationalist political activists in Tamilnadu illustrate the role of the LTTE in contemporary Tamil nationalism.

Tamilness and Environment

By accompanying Marcus to a couple of demonstrations and meetings I came to be aware of the environmental engagement of the youth involved in Eelam solidarity. This phenomenon has been termed 'green nationalism', in which environmental concerns are communicated through nationalist discourses and has been integral to for instance indigenous movements in the Americas. In Tamilnadu environmentalist concern is likewise communicated as concerning impingement on Tamil people's livelihood, environment and homeland and a violation of the people's sovereignty and security.

This has been most visible in relation to the participation of the radical camp in the anti-fracturing campaign, in which mineral exploitation in the Cauvery Delta has been of concern.

In May 2014 I was present at a documentary screening convened by the radical camp as part of the campaign against the methane fracturing in the Cauvery delta in the state. The screening began with commemoration of a renowned veteran Tamil environmentalist activist Nammalvar, who had recently passed away. What was remarkable is that he was commemorated in the manner the LTTE commemorated their fighters and activists by the phrase '*Veera Vannakkam*'. As mentioned earlier, the Tamilnadu activists were in the process of adapting and emulating practices of the LTTE in Eelam. Such syncretism also reflects the nationalist manner in which these activists perceive social and environmental issues in Tamilnadu.

The Cauvery delta was introduced as the agricultural heart of the ancient Tamil country of South India (*Tamilakam*) and the source of Chola power. The cosmological salience of land and agriculture among ancient and modern Tamils was also underlined. Environmental concern was upheld as inherent to Tamilness and its political identity. There

were several references to the socio-economic and cultural value of agriculture, farmers, land and environment for Tamils.

The documentary introduced methane exploitation schemes as an extension of the exploitation of the North-Indian Gujarati trading community called the Marwadis who exert monopoly in certain sectors of trade in the state. The Eastern Energy Corporation, a Gujarat state enterprise was given the contract to lead methane projects in Tamilnadu. The Central government had given the corporation permission to extract coal-seam methane gas in the Mannar’kudi area of the Cauvery delta. What followed was the illumination of methane gas extraction in the U.S. and Australia and the consequences for local inhabitants there. The documentary narrated that in the Cauvery delta, the most densely populated district in Tamilnadu and several villages in surrounding districts would be depleted of water due to contamination caused by fracturing procedures. It further went on to inform that over 2000 methane boring wells are planned to be constructed in the region.

Throughout the documentary several video clips from the last war in Eelam were shown, visualizing the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan state. It seemed that the organizers of the screening were alluding to the massacres as a looming threat to Tamilnadu Tamils due to the environmental hazards. In the documentary Tamilnadu based activists stated that the Central government would compel Tamils to defend their rights ‘by any means necessary’, if it remained persistent on industrialization in Tamilnadu. In this regard there were also several allusions to the armed struggle of the LTTE in Eelam.

My interlocutors were also involved with anti-nuclear and food sovereignty movements in the state, the latter being the advocacy of organic and local farmer centred agricultural production in Tamilnadu. This confirms that the environmentalist engagement of Tamil nationalism as displayed by the youth involved in the Eelam solidarity movement is multifaceted through agitating against mineral extraction, nuclear energy, multinational companies and for food sovereignty.

One day in May 2014 during a protest there was a large portrait of the Tamil environmentalist, Nammalvar next to posters stating ‘Go back Montesano’. I had also spotted Marcus selling a book written by an Eelam Tamil doctor regarding her years in the de-facto state of Eelam. This in itself is a link between the concerned environmental activism and pro-Eelam advocacy. There were books, pamphlets and

DVDs sold concerning the Green movement, the anti-methane movement, and Eelam.

It seems that Tamilness, self-determination and people's sovereignty, are interconnected themes which help Tamil environmentalists to connect with solidarity for Eelam. The environmental concerns of the activists are also grounded in references to Tamil soil, land, water, forests and the peculiar role nature has had in ancient Tamil literature and cosmology.

Anti-imperialism

Anti-imperialist ideals, actions and rhetoric were in particular prominent in the radical camp in the engagement for Eelam. During demonstrations and speeches, the U.S. was condemned for being complicit in the genocide in Eelam and in continuing to undermine the struggle for justice. The structural relationship between the U.S. and the Sri Lankan state as elaborated upon in the PPT verdict provided Tamilnadu with arguments for an anti-imperialist stand in their engagement for Eelam. The U.S. and its geo-political interests are by activists considered imperialist in its attempt through the UNHRC resolution to 'white wash genocide'.

In March 2015, protestors gathered in front of the U.S. embassy in Chennai, condemning the U.S. for aiding Sri Lanka. They held various placards which contrasted with those I had previously observed at other demonstrations. At this protest the placards had a classic Soviet theme, with a moustached worker holding a raised hammer over the Pepsi logo. One placard read 'Denial of genocide is also genocide', and the protestors held several posters, paintings and banners written mostly in English which advocated an independent Eelam while condemning the USA: 'We reject the Anti-Tamil resolution', 'U.S. get out of Tamil Eelam'.



Conclusion

In this chapter I have given an account of the various aspects involved in the constitution of the student activists' political engagement, ideas and actions. This implies that several strands of 'local' political traditions and global environmental concerns are intersected with the particular political engagement towards that of Eelam through a narrative of Tamilness. The activists articulated anti-nuclear, anti-fracturing, food sovereignty and anti-imperialist ideas and beliefs in a nationalist orientation with reference to Tamil people, land and rights and Eelam. Tamilnadu activists' environmental concerns are thus presented through the idiom of Tamil nationalism while the LTTE is cited as an inspirational political force. The political engagement as manifest in Tamilnadu, is thus ethno-oriented in a nationalist sense, while exhibiting transnational dimensions as political concerns are intertwined with the ethno-national cause of another nation. In the next chapter I will discuss and explore the texture of Tamilness and the centrality of Tamil identity and nationalism in the constitution of the political engagement of my interlocutors and by extension the solidary movement for Eelam.

Chapter 6: Tamilness and Political Identity

In this chapter I will explore the meaning and content of Tamilness and Tamil identity, argued in previous chapters as central in fuelling the engagement towards Eelam. Through this engagement Tamil identity is also negotiated, i.e. what constitutes Tamilness is articulated through the intersection of various political traditions such as Tamil and Dravidian nationalism as well the involvement of popular sections of Tamilnadu society. Moreover the political advocacy for Eelam is also a unifying factor which facilitates a common political platform transcending caste, class and religion for Tamilnadu Tamils to rally around. It thereby furthers the national consolidation of the Tamilnadu people who are situated within the formal boundaries of the Indian nation. Central to such a process of national-popular mobilization is political identity, subsequent awareness and political literacy.

What are the implications for the perceptions of identity among Tamil activists involved in the political engagement for Eelam? How do they perceive Tamilness? What role does Tamil cosmology and history play in contemporary political action? How does one practice Tamilness and what constitutes Tamil identity? What are the implications of agitation for Tamilnadu Tamils' conception of the Indian state?

I will also in this chapter introduce and analyze the discourses, political ideas, thoughts and traditions existent among Tamils in Tamilnadu propagating a radical Tamil identity in order to highlight how Tamil language, references to Tamilness and Tamil nationalist orientations were central in mobilizing people in support and solidarity with Tamils in Eelam.

Egalitarian Nationalism

The various activities of the civil protests in solidarity with Eelam proved that Tamilness was central in transcending previous impediments for cooperation, by gathering people from various backgrounds under a common banner. The political engagement for Eelam enabled an inclusive process of negotiating Tamilness. It facilitated cooperation and collective mobilization between the various strata of Tamils and was hence a unifying factor within the Tamilnadu polity.

For activists, references to Tamilness were central in formulating a shared Tamil identity transcending parochial identities, interests and markers of differentiation associated with caste, class, religion and region and in mobilizing collective behaviour. My interlocutors hailed from a range of social backgrounds from lower and middle castes, middle and working classes and Hindu and Roman Catholic faiths. Through their political engagement for Eelam, activists cooperated and expressed an ethno-political identity centred on a shared and inclusive Tamilness which overarched the other interests associated with their social backgrounds. The social ties built between variously situated interlocutors and through their organizational networks are of the type bridging social differences and cultivating cooperation, referred to by sociologists as 'bridging and bonding ties' noted in ethnic and nationalist mobilization (Pinto 2006). This also underscores the egalitarian dimensions of the linguistic identity and nationalist ideology which it promotes. Rajni Kothari (1990) argues that caste is the most characteristic social institution in India and constitutes a religious aspect, a secular aspect and aspect of consciousness. The secular is divided between government and political aspect. Borrowing Kothari's concept, the Dravidian – Tamil nationalist movement, leaned on the government aspect of caste to politically mobilize collective behavior, but did so on principles and ideas of equality informed by their radical nationalism rather than traditional religious hierarchy. Leaders were drawn from all sections of the Tamil populations, and respective castes were organized into the Tamil/Dravidian fraternity. With the present solidarity movement, this inclusive form of mobilization with Tamil nationalistic orientations is witnessed with leaders and activists drawn from a multiple of castes and communities within non-Brahmin population in the state.

In the academic literature on nationalism it is often the aggressive, dominant or banal forms of its manifestations which predominate i.e. Kapferer's (1988) classical study of Sinhala and Australian nationalism. Studies of progressive nationalism, progressive aspects of given nationalist mobilizations, or even the study of nationalisms of the oppressed are often neglected. The phenomena of nationalism are often conceptualized in academic literature as essentially divisive or aggressive. This I would argue, is the result of the fact that it is usually the state centred, majoritarian and dominant form of nationalism which is studied, a nationalism which tends to be associated with prevalent forms of power and systematic oppression. These forms of nationalism are best understood as aggressive, predatory, or even antagonistic nationalisms, as they are axed on the concepts of racial supremacy, systematic oppression and violence against another ethnic group or people. But the analytical focus on this particular form of nationalism neglects dynamics of nationalist

mobilization and discourse associated with political ideals of egalitarianism, social and political justice and human rights, as well as nationhood. Political mobilization on nationalistic grounds, centred on ethnic or linguistic identity and fraternity appears in the case of the Eelam solidarity movement, as inclusive of all Tamil speakers irrespective of caste, class, religion. Regarding inclusion or exclusion of the bi-lingual speakers living in the state, such as descendants of neighbouring Telugu, Kannadiga or Malayalee populations, there are differing discourses within the Tamil nationalist in the state. In Tamilnadu concern for their *thoppalkodi inam* (ethnic kin) was communicated by emphasising shared Tamilness and focusing on the cultural idiom of injustice. Tamil identity as a vehicle for collective mobilization was subject to continuous articulation, negotiation and reproduction throughout the solidarity movement. Such a collective imagination actualized and generated political actions and discourse. Jesuthas, an activist associated with the radical camp, shed light on how the solidarity movement influenced the general populace of Tamilnadu. He stated that self-respect had been reinstated into the Tamil language and identity, and claimed that youth in Chennai who previously discarded their vernacular language and appropriated English, are now speaking Tamil with fervour and without English ‘corruption’. Furthermore the activists preferred and valued articulation and speaking in Tamil. In most of my interaction with activists there was an overall tendency to speak in a ‘pure’ Tamil whilst in Chennai there are Tamil sociolects with influences of English, Sanskrit/Hindi and neighbouring Dravidian languages.

In this chapter I will give an ethnographical account illuminating the various sub-streams associated with Tamilness as expressed by the activists.

Tamilness

Tamilness is denoted in this thesis to refer to a political ideology centred on Tamil identity and the qualities of being Tamil. Tamilness was an engagement of nationalist orientations and was deemed by activists as something practiced. It was expressed among the activists in frequent references to various metaphoric kinship terms; *Tamilar* (Tamils) *Tamil marapu* (Tamil heritage), *Tamil inam* (Tamil ethnicity), *Tamil varalaru* (history) *Tamil mozhi* (Tamil language), and *Tamil rattam* (Tamil blood) as the basis of political narratives which enabled political mobilization in the present.

These terms were frequent in the literature, slogans, and speeches of the agitation, in

which kinship terms, language and history seemed to form the fundament for interrelatedness with the affected Eelam Tamils. Moreover it was also in reference to Tamilness that activists demanded political action from the public. Through protest activities, political identity and conceptions associated with Tamilness and Eelam solidarity were propagated, communicated and reproduced.

References to Tamilness enchanted the above mentioned kinship terms by signifying a collective political identity, hence informing political engagement among my interlocutors and by extension pro-Eelam activists and the solidary public. Tamilness was the platform upon which socio-political concerns and action was communicated by activists in transcendence of caste, class and religious identities which promoted 'internal' social differentiation.

When I asked what drove them in their political engagement, my interlocutors mentioned as crucial factors that it concerned a *thoppal'kodi inam* (kindred ethnic kin), *Tamilargal* (Tamils), and that there is socio-historical relationships between Eelam and Tamilnadu Tamils. These aspects were additionally stressed by the activists alongside the geographical proximity between the two Tamil speaking people. I observed that these factors created a sense of urgency demanding action, engagement, concern and sympathy among the Tamils in Chennai towards Eelam.

The humanitarian concern and political engagement for Eelam was unambiguously centred on a Tamil nationalist orientation, yet this is not an uncommon transpiration. Throughout the world there are examples of nationalist engagement oriented towards kindred ethnic groups. Parallel cases would be the phenomenon of Albanians in Albania espousing solidarity with their ethnic kin in Kosovo and Macedonia or Kurds in Turkey supporting the plight of Kurds in Iran or Syria. The peculiarity in the case of Tamilnadu and Eelam as mentioned in the introduction is that such nationalist concern was not grounded on a common state project and did not cease over time. Most importantly neither the Tamilnadu Tamils nor Eelam Tamils imagined themselves as belonging to a common nation; they were clearly identified as two distinct nations with two separate traditional homelands. The transnationalism of Tamils is perhaps similar to the manner in which Kurds have organized inter-national solidarity uniting Kurdish movements in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Tamil identity has in both Tamilnadu and Eelam sustained the power to mobilize the people into action to safeguard their linguistic-national rights. It is relevant to bear in mind that Tamil as an identity is principally based on shared language, cosmology, history and territory. To expound the political actions in my study, the exploration of Tamil identity as practiced and

understood by the activists in general and my interlocutors in particular are warranted. What forms the basis for the grounding and reproduction of the political consciousness and engagement which advocates solidarity for Eelam?

Tamil Identity

Throughout my fieldwork, I engaged in prolonged conversations with activists regarding their own conceptions, understanding and experiences of Tamilness and what they viewed as motivating them in political engagement. I had the opportunity to conduct interviews pertaining to these topics, in which I was given elaborate answers from the activists, both individually and in groups. This material provides insight into the constitution of Tamil identity by highlighting the activists' own words concerning the dynamics between their political engagements, understanding of Tamil identity, Tamilness and Eelam.

This material is to be understood as representational for the political consciousness which is formed, negotiated and reproduced through the Eelam-solidarity movement and the subsequent collective behaviour and engagement.

Kumar

Kumar believed that Tamil identity or the criteria of practicing Tamilness was not only determined by heritage and birth. For him it was a question of adopting Tamil language which mattered, and practicing the politics associated with the wellbeing of its speakers. The politics of language was observably quite poignant in the modern history of Tamilnadu and Eelam as it formed the basis for various forms of national mobilization at various historical junctions. Kumar contrasted this stress on language with a discourse promoted by one Tamil nationalist organization which claimed that the quality of Tamilness is determined by blood and genetics. He ridiculed this concept of Tamilness and identity, and condemned it as detrimental to Tamil unity. His remarks shed light on the dynamics of 'internal discourses' and indicate the constant negotiation of Tamil national identity and its various conceptions among various schools of thoughts. Tamilness is not subscribed to by activists as a fixed notion, yet the identity or discourses articulated in reference to it is situated within a certain

nationalist framework delineated by language and political engagement.

Kumar understood belonging to the Tamil nation and identity as based on one's ability to adapt to and practice Tamilness rather than on origins through blood and genetics. Tamilness and its meaning is constantly debated, negotiated and articulated throughout the course of agitation. In Tamilnadu there were also bi-lingual Tamil nationalist activists who were descendants from the closely related Telugu speaking people. Thus a person's inclusion into Tamil *adaiyalam* (identity) and practicing Tamilness was considered by many activists as based on political actions and thought reflecting concerns and grievances of the Tamil polity rather than genetics. Kumar would criticize the blood bound concept of Tamilness propagated as being antithetical to the Tamil nationalist tradition. Yet as critics of instrumentalist approaches to ethnicity and identity point out, identity as argued by Cohen (1974) is not merely a social construction designed for political purposes where anything goes (Eriksen 2002:54). Rather, in the case at hand, the basis for being included into Tamil identity and imagined community proved to revolve around a Dravidian framework where individuals hailing from a related Dravidian speaking population can be ascribed Tamil identity when engaging politically for Tamil nationalist orientations. In Tamilnadu, the leader of the MDMK and veteran Tamil nationalist Vaiko, is a testimony to the inclusion of Telugu speakers into Tamil nationalism.

Marcus

Marcus was particularly articulate in his description of the solidarity movement, and his knowledge, experience and conceptions provide us with insight into his political consciousness.

He was from the coastal belt of southern Tamilnadu, a region where various communities have had traditional socio-cultural and economic bonds with the Eelam coast on the opposite side of the Palk Bay. Consequently there has been significant migration from this region throughout history to the southern coasts of Sri Lanka and Marcus was related to Tamils in the Southern parts of the island (Abeyasinghe 2005).

During the interview Marcus stressed that it was the Koodankulam agitation and the release of the Balachandran photographs which effectively made him participate in the Eelam-solidarity movement. The Loyola hunger strike of March 2013, which erupted

following the release of the execution photographs, was referred to by Marcus as a turning point for him and many students in becoming politically engaged towards Eelam. The incident made possible the upheaval witnessed in 2013 in Tamilnadu and was one among a series of critical events in the Eelam agitation (See chapter 4). He had also partaken in a boycott of a Hindi/Bollywood movie which was deemed biased against Eelam and Tamils. This was a part of the pro-Eelam agitation in which Tamil films were previously boycotted citing similar reasons. Marcus expressed that he and others boycotted the movie as it portrayed: “Eelam Tamils, Tamilnadu Tamils and the Rajiv Gandhi assassination in a biased manner”.

When asked about the Indian state and Indian national identity, he expressed:

“My village is a coastal village, I was aware of the existence of another patch of land across the sea where Tamils lived. If we cross the seas, they would speak the same language, they were not different from us, I never had this Indian thing. I thought that they were Tamils. That was my childhood notion.”

The common Tamil lingo-cultural basis and traditional bonds between the people and the importance of geographical factors such as the ocean is elaborated upon by Marcus as facilitating commonness, a common Tamilness. Furthermore Tamil history is a strong reference point in his elaboration of the connectivity between Eelam and Tamilnadu.

“Whenever we could not project power over this ocean, we were losing our land, coast...it is unfortunately called Bay of Bengal, it should be Tamil ocean, it is a Tamil ocean, the genocide happened for control of this ocean.”

The ocean is conceived as a crucial factor which links the geographical and political entities of Eelam and Tamilnadu. Likewise the Indian Ocean is understood as the pivot of geopolitical dynamics. The attacks against and the killing of Tamil fishermen from the Southern districts of Tamilnadu in the deep seas off the Eelam coast by the Sri Lankan navy constitutes a direct material link for Tamilnadu Tamils with the violence of the Sri Lankan state against Eelam Tamils (Gupta and Sharma 2008:106-111). Marcus’s words are illustrative of how this affects the Tamilnadu activists and their conception of the world:

“Till 2009 the state (Sri Lanka) stated that they (fishermen) have been killed and excused it claiming it was due to an identity error, due to mistakes of them being

Eelam Tamil or LTTE. Till then they were being continuously harassed and killed. After 2009 there is the continuation of this. This showed the bond that the Sri Lankan state conceived Eelam Tamils and Tamilnadu Tamils as a single ethnic or racial group.”

The consistent neglect of the agitation in Tamilnadu and their demands by the Central government is explained by many of the activists themselves through the entrenched Brahmin – non-Brahmin or Hindi/North Indian-Tamil binary. In multiple discussions, my interlocutors would identify ‘*pappanaar*’ and ‘*brahmanam*’, i.e. Brahmins and Brahminism as the milieu and ideology of ruling classes. Indian state actions are consequently conceptualized through this established political tradition and narrative of Tamil and Dravidian nationalism.

Brahmanism and India

In many of the meetings I attended and observed, when veteran leaders of Tamil movements held speeches they would often mention the historical and contemporary roles played by Brahmanism and the Indian state in suppressing the development of Tamils. It was evident that Tamil nationalism, history and identity were through a long political tradition juxtaposed with Indian nationalism and national identity, the central state, its historiography and narrations. This is exemplified in the consistent resistance against the Congress and the Central state by political movements in Tamilnadu. M.S.S. Pandian has in his numerous writings on the Dravidian movement illuminated the conflict between the pan-Indian nation and its nationalism and the Tamil imagination of the popular nation anchored in Tamilness. In response to Indian nationalism and Brahmin/Hindi hegemony, the social movements in Tamilnadu demanded the independence of Tamils and Dravidians. This political legacy has had tangible influence on the Eelam solidarity movement.

The Self-Respect Movement and Dravida Kazhagam (DK) both founded by Periyar were dedicated to empower and mobilize the Tamil masses and combat Brahmin hegemony, and spearheaded the counter-hegemonic processes towards such end. M.S.S. Pandian notes how the Self-Respect Movement “inverted the Brahmin/nationalist construction of Sanskrit as a sign of superior culture and reinscribed it as a field of cultural production introducing and legitimising inequalities based on Hinduism and its caste system.” (Pandian 1996:3325)

The Brahmin castes constitute the upper strata of society and state. *Brahmanam* or Brahmanism is an emic term used by the Dravidian political tradition and contemporary

Tamil nationalist orientations to denote the hegemony exercised by Brahmins in the state and society both historically and contemporarily. Gramsci understands hegemony as the cultural and political domination of the upper classes, in which they successfully make subordinated groups emulate their norms, values and interests and naturalize the power constellations (Gramsci 1971:181-82). In India it denotes the epistemological power and agency enjoyed by the Brahmins which reproduces and sustains their political and cultural hegemony. Brahmanism also denotes the varnasrama-dharma ideology which naturalizes Brahmins' position and privilege as well as varna/caste divisions in society (Bergunder 2004). This ideology maintains century old notions of Aryan supremacy and labels the Dravidian population as the lowest category of the Hindu hierarchical system; the Shudras. This sort of Brahmanical ideology is also internalized to varying degree by their allied or subordinated caste or class groups, who have both through processes of Brahmanization and Sanskritization undergone emulation of Brahmanical values, practices and beliefs. Brahmanization may be used to refer to historic processes of Brahmin domination which brought about their hegemony, whereas Sanskritization, a concept reintroduced by M.N. Srinivas (1952), refers to the colonial process during which subaltern groups or non-Brahmin castes underwent a collective social engineering process in which they emulated Brahmanical practices. This was a process of negative assertion pursued by Tamils and others in a bid to attain social mobility through ascendance in the ritual hierarchy of Hinduism controlled by Brahmins. In these instances non-Brahmin castes assimilated Brahmanical practices, such as prohibition on consuming alcohol and beef, and registered their caste names in government census with Sanskrit terms to assert higher positions within the varna-system.

Periyar opposed these processes of emulation as he believed they legitimized Brahmin hegemony and as early as in 1929 during a Self-Respect Conference in Tiruchi he exclaimed, "All this should stop; caste discrimination should be totally rooted out. Belittling our own caste in which we are born and adding another caste name for the sake of pseudo prestige is the most shameful thing in my opinion". (Periyar 2013: 9-13).

Periyar described the process as one of negative assertion and 'pseudo prestige' legitimizing caste discrimination and Brahmin hegemony. Brahmanical hegemony is associated with Sanskrit-Aryan centric narratives of history and the Indian nation, sustained by the logic of the Brahmanical ideology of varnaasrama-dharma, in which Brahmin and Aryan supremacy is sanctioned and caste discrimination naturalized.

During British colonial rule though Brahmins constituted a mere three percent of the total population, they had a near monopolistic hold on the Madras Presidency administration

with Brahmins constituting the top bureaucratic classes (Suntharalingam 1980:123; Arooran 1980:38). M.S.S. Pandian in his article ‘Self-Respecters’ Tamil’ elucidates this sort of dual domination enjoyed by the Brahmins under colonialism:

“...the Janus-faced existence of the Brahmin meant that he now combined his pre-existing hegemony in indigenous society exercised through caste and religion, with his new-found authority in the colonial ‘political society’ – each spilling into the other.” (Pandian 1996)

He notes that it was the bilingual proficiency in English, the language of the colonial power, and Sanskrit, the language of the traditional authority which provided them with the means to exercise dual hegemony in a budding Indian republic and into ‘modernity’. Pandian analyses the Self-Respect Movement and its stand on the language question, in which he provides insight into the philosophy of the non-Brahmin movement which identified Hindi and Indian nationalism, Brahmins and Sanskrit as constellations of power and oppression.

Periyar, during a speech delivered in 1941 in Tiruchi, also condemned the collusion between Brahmins and the British colonial government, and lamented the lack of ‘nationality’ among Tamils (Periyar 1983). He addressed the Tamil masses as both Dravidian and Adi-Dravidian, the former denoting non-Brahmins and the latter the Dalits or untouchables, and urged to mobilize national unity.

During the anti-Hindi agitations in the late 1930s, the caste and linguistic-national question was central to the Self-Respect Movement’s agitation against the INC and Indian nationalist political engagement. Sanskrit was identified as the epistemological source for Brahmanism to subsist upon and was subsequently subjected to severe criticism:

“The founder of the Self-Respect Movement, E.V. Ramasamy and his close associates like Kootusi Gurusamy engaged in a sustained critique of Sanskrit’s claim to superior form of knowledge/culture.”(Pandian 1996: 3325).

Although Periyar had an ambivalent relationship with Tamil nationalists on the language question and on the exclusion/inclusion of other Dravidian speakers, he regarded Tamil language as the vehicle to empower the Tamil masses. Such an understanding of the Tamil nation facilitated the compatibility of the politics of the Dravidian movement and Tamil nationalism in the manifestation of the contemporary solidarity engagement for Eelam.

“It is my opinion that the Tamil language is capable of contributing to the progress and freedom of the people in all fields, and will be conducive to a life of dignity and reason.....I am aware that Tamil has arts, customs, traditions, and an appropriate

vocabulary, which can contribute to a greater advancement than most other Indian languages. Therefore, any other language that is likely to cause disadvantage to Tamil is unwelcome". (Periyar 2007 : 549-550)

Periyar stresses the utilitarian and egalitarian nature of Tamil which can uplift the masses. In contrast he links Sanskrit/Hindi and the Brahmanical religion to caste and denounces it as exclusionist, chauvinist and oppressive (Anaimuthu 1974 II:969).

Throughout Tamilnadu's modern history and evident in the Eelam-solidarity movement, the imagination of the popular nation is juxtaposed to Indianess and centred on Tamilness. The Indian nation and national narratives centred on Sanskrit historiography and North-Indian and Hindi centric narrations are considered by Tamil political activists a pretext to perpetuate Brahmanical and Hindi hegemony. It was considered oppressive and promulgated as against Tamil interests.

As mentioned in Chapter two, this led to the mobilization of non-Brahmin elites in the Justice Party and subaltern sections of the Tamil masses under the Self-Respect Movement during the early 20th century. Implementing Hindi as the official language was a primary concern for the nation building project as envisaged by the INC. From the 1920s till the 1960s the INC attempted to impose Hindi on Tamilnadu on numerous accounts, only to be met with stiff opposition in the forms of the anti-Hindi agitations. Paran, alongside other interlocutors would refer to Tamil identity and the political tradition they endorsed in connection to resistance to the Indian state and its national project.

The Popular Nation

In mass media, particularly Tamil language television and social media there was popular discussion about Eelam and Tamilnadu centered socio-political issues. Since 2010, Tamil media coverage has paralleled the unfolding agitation and proved to be central in facilitating space for the political expression, discussion and education of activists and the general public. Marcus explained the central role of such mediums of communication and pointed out that he was also influenced by media discourses to engage politically. Aside from narrations on the genocide in Eelam, these discourses also stressed a shared Tamilness which again enhanced solidarity for the political cause. In a similar spirit, among the activists there was a strong tendency to perceive the Tamilnadu people in national terms as well as identifying their grievances as national issues. Activists like Marcus followed debates on

television as well as on Facebook and internet blogs, in which a range of issues pertaining to Tamilnadu were discussed.

Moreover as observed in the political literature and pamphlets produced in the agitation, and heard through speeches and conversations with activists, it is evident that the political engagement for Eelam also incorporates Tamilnadu based social issues. These issues include agitation against the Koodankulam nuclear plant, the death penalty, privatization, methane extraction, anti-Sterlite mining campaign in Salem district, and the rights of Tamilnadu fishermen.

The above mentioned issues are perceived by the activists as anti-people activities in Tamilnadu and are engagements intertwined with the advocacy for Eelam. The common Tamilness stressed in the political engagement for Eelam revitalizes as well as negotiates a pan-Tamil consciousness, in which various actors contribute and elaborate upon an overarching identity connecting Eelam and Tamilnadu Tamils. Moreover it is apparent that there is consolidation of a national character among Tamilnadu Tamils as evident in the political consciousness, rhetoric and discourses promoted by activists. Socio-political issues affecting Tamilnadu Tamils are deemed as national grievances rather than solely individual local issues.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the contents of Tamilness with emphasis on the interlocutors' narrations. I have also given historical contextualization of the political literacy and conceptions of Tamil nationalist traditions and the activists. Subsequently I have illuminated the continuity in tension between Tamils and Tamil identity on one hand and those associated with Indian nationalism on the other. Tamil linguistic identity was centrifugal in the proposition of Tamil nationhood, independent and often in opposition to the national Indian identity. I have also argued in the previous chapters that it is seemingly the transnational dynamics between Eelam Tamils and Tamilnadu political actors in engagement for Eelam which empowers Tamil nationalist orientations and mobilization in Tamilnadu in the present. In the following chapter, I will illustrate a case study of the Remembrance Day of Mulli'vaykal as observed in Chennai to shed light on how the various aspect of the solidarity movement discussed in the chapters above is practiced.

Chapter 7: The Remembrance

Remembrance of the large scale killings which occurred in the North Eastern coastal strip of Mulli'vaykal in Sri Lanka in May 2009 has been annually observed on the 18th and 19th of May. On this day Eelam Tamils and Tamilnadu activists commemorate the civilians massacred as well as the rebel fighters who are deemed martyrs for the cause of Eelam.

Remembrance Day or *Mulli'vaykal Ninaivu Naazh* has been a central ritual and event among the Eelam Tamil diaspora since 2009. In Tamilnadu since 2009 it has also been a focal point for the agitation on behalf of Eelam and in the past has drawn large public participation.

Furthermore, a range of pamphlets available online, corroborated that Mulli'vaykal Remembrance Day was observed around the world in cities in the U.S. , U.K. , Canada, Germany, Denmark, Norway and Australia. In India it was held in New Delhi and Chennai as well as in several cities around Tamilnadu. In Eelam it has been banned by the Sri Lankan state and military, but despite the prohibition Tamil provincial councilors and Tamil civilians have held clandestine commemoration in places like Killinochi, Jaffna and Mullaithivu (Tamilnet 2014a;b).

Critical Event

Remembrance Day is thus a *transnational event* with focus on the 2009 massacres and the political injustice inflicted upon Eelam Tamils. It is this event which crystallizes the transnational character of the political engagement towards Eelam, as it engenders a pan-Tamil consciousness centered on Mulli'vaykal.

It is in many ways what Veena Das (1997) has termed as 'critical event' in her analysis of the partition which gave rise to the modern states of India and Pakistan. As mentioned in chapter 4, Mulli'vaykal and its Remembrance Day proved to be a catalyst in galvanizing the contemporary agitation in solidarity with Eelam and still plays a central role in constitution of the social movement. As argued earlier, Mulli'vaykal is beyond a critical event, and to which effect I have termed it a centrifugal event. For my interlocutors and by extension the activists engaging for Eelam, Mulli'vaykal was the event which compelled them towards political activism for the political and legal rights of Eelam Tamils.

What follows in this chapter, is a case study and ethnographical account of the

Remembrance Day observed on May 18th 2015 in commemoration of Mulli'vaykal. The political actions, symbols, rituals, and rhetoric will be contextualized and categorized in a manner which reflects the activists own life world and categorization. The overall study follows these categorical dimensions in order to elucidate the development of the political engagement for Eelam in Tamilnadu and the conceptions of the activists involved in it.

The Event: Tamil Ocean and Genocide

Remembrance Day has been commemorated on a large scale in 2011, 2012 and 2013 in Chennai and other places in Tamilnadu, and has become the scene of large public participation and outrage against the Lankan state. From an anthropological perspective it is also a ritualized event with heavy connotation to Tamil myth, history and also the LTTE. I arrived at the venue of the Remembrance Day in Chennai, the Marina beach, in the midst of preparations. Police personnel were positioning themselves in an effort to box in the premises of the commemoration event. There were also people with video and photo cameras, some of whom were from the movements while others appeared as media personnel apparent from the minimal interaction with the activists. The usual crowd of families, lovers and friends were also present, as going to the beach is a favorite recreational activity in Chennai.

The police stood silently adjacent to the students who held the banner criticizing the U.S. and Sri Lanka. Incidentally the LTTE was banned in India, and six years ago such public display of support would have been persecuted as it is criminalized. The public adherence to the cause of the LTTE and the restricted police capacity to prohibit it amidst the criminalization of the LTTE and Eelam in India is perhaps one of the most telling indications of the transformative effects of the sustained agitation in Tamilnadu.

What formed the symbolic and physical centre of the gathering were two structures placed adjacent to each other, one a symbolic burial mound, the second the famed LTTE pillar of fire, upon which the LTTE leadership would light the fire to commemorate the spirit of fallen Eelam Tamils. The fire symbolized the spirit of the martyred in the struggle as well as the quest for political justice and independence. In the diaspora and Tamilnadu the pillar and the LTTE tradition of rituals has become the mode of commemoration of the massacres at Mulli'vaykal 2009.

Placed on the burial mound was the portrait of the LTTE leader's twelve year old son Balachandran, who was murdered in custody by Sri Lankan armed forces during the last war.

His portrait was raised so it faced the ocean or the ‘Tamil ocean’ as denoted by the organizers, which indicated an interesting stream of consciousness in the politics espoused by the solidarity movement. The commemoration event was announced on Facebook and advertised through flyers and posters found on walls and buildings alongside busy public venues in the city. On the flyers the venue of the event was declared as near the ‘Tamil ocean’.

My interlocutors had informed me that the concept of the Tamil ocean denoted what is otherwise known as the Indian Ocean. Marcus would explain, “It is in fact an ocean which has been the locus for various Tamil empires, communities and processes throughout history, and for us Tamils the ocean holds a great significance. We are people of the ocean”. He was in his comment pointing out the modern construction of the Indian state and the concept of India, and this line of thought was integral to the political consciousness surrounding concerned Tamilness. Among many of the politically active youth, Tamil history was made relevant in the present as a source to interpret and formulate contemporary political orientations, rhetoric and rituals including those concerning historical continuity and territorial contiguity. For Tamil nationalists there is an abundant source of recorded history such as archeological and literary evidences spanning as far back as 2500 BC (in Adichanallur and Pooneryn archeological sites and in the literary work *Tholkappiyam*) documenting the presence and continuity of Tamil maritime bonds and settlements. Accordingly Marcus and the activists were laying claims of authenticity to the ocean surrounding Tamilnadu and Eelam as the Tamil ocean. Most of the Tamil empires in the classic and early medieval period had in fact been maritime based empires, in particular the imperial Cholas who in the 11th century held an empire ranging from Maldives in the West, to Bengal in the North, and to Sumatra, Indonesia (Srivijaya) in the East.

Activists were also seen walking towards the entrance of the beach, positioning themselves along the stretch, holding large banners directed towards bypassers on the road. Two young activists held one of the banners which read in English “International Independent Investigation on Genocide on Sri Lankan Govt. Referendum for Independent Tamil Eelam Now”. Another banner read the following in English “Not just War Crimes, it’s an ongoing Genocide” while the Tamil portion above it read “The massacres in Eelam are not War Crimes, it is genocide. Investigations into genocide are necessary. Investigate the Sri Lankan government, not the Tamils”.

These slogans of the pro-Eelam movement were reiterating a deep rooted critique of the Lankan government and its protracted practice towards Eelam. Also the international

community is criticized for its leniency towards Sri Lanka. The ‘ethnic conflict’ and the situation in Sri Lanka in the post-2009 international scenario needs to be addressed in order to contextualize the slogans and demands propagated by the activists.



Since the end of the war in 2009 at Mulli’vaykal, the Sri Lankan state has denied civilian deaths and the allegation of atrocities against the Tamil civil population and the rebels. The international community has since maintained a degree of pressure on Sri Lanka based on human rights violations through the UNHRC sessions (22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th) and the subsequent U.S. sponsored resolutions. Although some criticism regarding the non-cooperation of Colombo with the international process was noted by the U.N. and U.S., Sri Lanka was considered a legitimate partner in investigating allegations against their own armed forces. Sri Lanka has defied and refuted any demand of cooperation and been allowed to opt for an internal inquiry.

Such a stand from the international community is viewed by activists in Tamilnadu, political and civic society groups in Eelam and by organizations in the diaspora as toothless and is looked upon by the radicals as a conspiracy to whitewash Sri Lanka. This forms a basis which informs the demands of genocide to be addressed, as activists consider war crimes and crimes against humanity as inadequate conceptualizations obfuscating the intentionality motivating the nature of the crimes against the Tamils.

Ambedkar, Periyar, Marx and LTTE

On the location of the event itself CDs and DVDs were placed on plastic sheets on the ground in two stands with books on Ambedkar, Periyar, Dalit struggles, Marxism, the Eelam liberation struggle and the LTTE. Such a collection of literature on separate but interrelated political traditions assembled together on Remembrance Day, is an indication of the multiple faces of Tamil nationalist orientations which sustain the political agitation for Eelam and is discussed in Chapter 5.

Central in the commemoration was also cultural performances with themes of resistance and struggle which lasted for around an hour. A large blue sheet was placed on the ground between the ritual structures and the crowd. Two young females and males each wearing a blue shirt with the portrait of Ambedkar took position upon it. They were each holding a round leather single drum known as *parai*, with the accompanying stick. They wore *kulusai*, the anklet bells worn in traditional and classical dances of South India and Sri Lanka. *Parai* was once an instrument of message and veneration which later had been subject to intense forms of caste oppression and became associated with untouchability and death. It had since the late 19th century and the 20th century been a locus for caste assertion and Dalit and lower caste resistance to the oppressive Brahmanical interpretation of their status.



The young activists were members of an Ambedkarite cultural troupe, who used the *parai* and composed revolutionary songs in their struggle against caste oppression. In Tamilnadu they had also made common cause with pro-Eelam activists in commemorating martyrs of resistance. As they heated their *parai* above open fire as it was the traditional method of tuning the instrument, four pro-Eelam activists also gathered close and performed Tamil martial arts known as *Silambam*, in which a long bamboo staff is used as the main weapon.

The troupe sang in memory of the massacres of Dalits, and songs which hailed resistance by the oppressed. They sang in the traditional Tamil folk tunes, while activists performed *Parai'attam*- simultaneously performing the folk dance which accompanies the playing of the *parai* drum. The elaborate and rhythmic dance and beating of the *parai* grabbed everyone's attention, and the crowd and activists fell silent to listen to the performance.

The intersection between Ambedkarite and Periyarite politics and literature in Tamil nationalist and pro –Eelam political activism in Tamilnadu proved recurrent. Both ideological traditions advocate anti-casteism and radical change. To intertwine these ideologies and activism with the Eelam national struggle is viewed as natural for political activists advocating and sympathizing with the cause for Eelam on the grounds that they represent interrelated *emancipatory ideologies*. Thus there is a pre-existing platform of solidarity between these ideologies. However the Eelam Tamil liberation struggle appears to form the primary basis for the concerned political engagement as the slogans are centered on Tamilness and Eelam. This is very evident on Remembrance Day, which constitutes the symbolic zenith of political engagement for Eelam in Tamilnadu.

Adherence to the LTTE was omnipresent in politics in Chennai- from public meetings and political posters, to LTTE songs played at political meetings including those organized by Dalits/Ambedkarite organizations. The resistance put forth by the LTTE in challenging the Sri Lankan state oppression of Tamils was heralded in these instances. The following incident will illustrate such a dimension, as the public was vividly espousing support for the LTTE by taking a stand to uplift the ban on the movement despite being against stated Indian national interest. The fact that the activists could mobilize the Tamil public despite such contradiction with Indianess illuminates the transformative effects achieved through politics for Eelam in Tamilnadu. It also demonstrates that the LTTE and Tamilness are significant ideological

sources for activists and the solidary public, in informing political engagement and social actions and articulating Tamil identity.



The crowd holding portraits of the LTTE leader

I observed more than three hundred seated persons on the beach, many holding small placards. There was a steady influx of people, and also notable media presence. Following a signal from the activists, the seated crowd simultaneously raised portraits of LTTE leader Pirapakaran and slogans were heard calling for the lifting of the ban on the LTTE. The LTTE has been banned by India since 1991, following the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, and was later also banned by the EU and the U.S.

The public also shouted slogans condemning the Indian and Sri Lankan government and demanded international action on behalf of Eelam. As was practice one activist would shout a slogan and the rest would chant it, resonating rhythmically. In Tamil some of the slogans were in tune with the LTTE tradition of commemoration as they chanted “*veera vanakkam*” for those who had sacrificed their life in the liberation struggle of Eelam. Slogans were also chanted demanding the creation of an independent Eelam as they promised to protest anything which attempted to obfuscate such an end. Once the songs and the *parai* concluded, the fire on the commemorative pillar was lit. Close to two thousand people had gathered, as the entire premise of the Remembrance Day was brimming. People lit their candles either placing it on the sand or holding them. A line was formed with prominent activists and veteran political leaders from Tamilnadu who in accordance with the LTTE tradition proceeded singularly to pay homage to the dead and martyred, symbolized by the

fire upon the pillar. After this the public walked towards the pillar and the burial mound erected for Balachandran, and placed their candles before the portrait. By now the darkness was lit only by the pyre and candles of commemoration at the beach.

The ritual structures, the pillar and the grave mound with Balachandran's photo were the physical locus for the commemoration event. The fire (pyre) was located atop a broad white pillar. Placed upon it was a map of Eelam illustrating the North-Eastern territories of Sri Lanka in red, as used by the LTTE. A bed of flowers surrounded the pillar on the ground.

Two Eelam Tamil families (identifiable by their spoken Tamil), paid their respects as they would do either in their homeland under the LTTE during the 'Great Heroes Day' (27th November) or in post-2009 during Remembrance Day held in the diaspora. Two women, wearing the characteristic Portuguese styled skirts widely used in Sri Lanka wailed loudly while kneeling in front of the candle lit pillar. Emotions were high and the fire was raging and it was no hard task to absorb the emotional and symbolic weight of the commemoration.

It is noteworthy that while such rituals have been taking place in Eelam and in the diaspora among Eelam Tamils for more than two decades, it was a rather new phenomenon in Tamilnadu. It has particularly become a central event in Chennai since 2009 due to the engagement of pro-Eelam activists. Despite the unfamiliarity of this ritualized commemoration, speeches or poetry honoring the deeds of the dead and the use of fire to symbolize a cause are all grounded in pan-Tamil cosmology, history and ritual practice. Although being communicated on a familiar platform, in Tamilnadu such rituals have largely been in service of Saivite religion and popular folk deities. Thereby the LTTE rituals also marked the emergence of a Tamil tradition and conception of the world which stressed political resistance and secular nationhood (Fuglerud 2011). The Remembrance Day organized annually forms the most symbolic, significant and ritualized event in the series of events within the political engagement for Eelam. It is also an act through which participants are reminded of Mulli'vaykal and the plight of the Eelam Tamils remaining in the homeland.



Chapter 8:

Indian National Media Narratives and Tamil Agitation

As illustrated in previous chapters, the political agitation for Eelam and by extension Tamil and Dravidian nationalism in Tamilnadu, promotes discourses and narratives which are in contrast to or even conflicting with the Indian state centric narratives and discourses. Such a conflict arises from the diverging point of view in interpreting events pertaining to the dynamics between Eelam, Sri Lanka, India and Tamilnadu. In this chapter I will focus on Tamilnadu activists' own actions and narratives to contrast them with discourses presented by the national media, in particular regarding the controversial Rajiv assassination case and Indo-Lanka relations. The former may be regarded as the Tamil-centric narration and discourse while the latter propagated by the national media is defined as the Indian-national narration or discourse. I will also analyse the tension between Indian and Tamil identity categories by analysing the effects of the Eelam solidarity movement on the structural relations between the Central Indian government and the state of Tamilnadu.

I have also juxtaposed the Indian national media with Tamil language based media services within India for analytical purposes in order to display the tension and divergence in narratives of the Indian state. This contrast is in accordance with the interlocutors own understanding and conceptions of the world. The Indian national media is particular in its projection of 'national'; my interlocutors relay that it predominantly represents pan-Indian narratives and maintains a New Delhi and North-centric idea of India. In their discourses activists in Tamilnadu employed a peculiar term in referral to this national media as 'Hinglish media' and the archetypical Indian as 'Hindian', denoting the Hindi and English bilingualism of those enjoying 'national' hegemony. My interlocutors frequently pointed out that when Hindi is spoken on national English media, such as NDTV, NewsX, IBN, Headlines Today, etc. there are no subtitles for the viewers of multi-lingual India. My younger interlocutors explained that this alongside other factors reflected a Hindi-belt centered idea of India, disregarding the multi-national existences in the peripheries. While the Indian state and most of its bilingual (Hindi-English speaking) citizens view Hindi as the official language of India, Tamil activists view it as a tool of domination. Such views are also expressed by protest movements in Tamilnadu, Assam and other North Eastern states which challenge the Indian Central government's Hindi centric policies.

The Indian national media news coverage, both in print and on television, produced

and reproduced narratives and discourses framing the Eelam-solidarity agitation in Tamilnadu and by extension the Eelam struggle as anti-national, parochial and emotional. This was evident in the rhetoric used in news coverage of events pertaining to Sri Lanka and the agitation, reflecting the tension between Indian and Tamil national narratives, discourses, identity and political engagement.

Free the Tamils: Demonstration against Death Penalty

In recurrent demonstrations I observed activists who agitated against the death sentence given to three Tamils convicted in the judicial case which followed the assassination of former Indian Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. Two Eelam Tamils, Murugan and Shantan and one Indian Tamil, Perarivalan were all arrested in 1991 and have since been on death row.

On 5th February 2014 a peaceful march with over 200 participants organized by a prominent organization in the radical camp, demanded the release of the three Tamils. The invitation pamphlet stated ‘Indian government do not interfere in the rights and sovereignty of Tamilnadu! Release the seven immediately’. (see picture below).

The activists conceptualize the Indian Central-government’s actions towards the imprisonment or execution of the convicted Tamils as interference of Tamilnadu’s sovereignty and in violation of provisions in the Indian constitution. Such discourses on part of the Tamil activists are significant and a testament to the subjective and collective belief among them of their nationhood and autonomy vis a vis India. In terms of Center- state relations, this poses a challenge as Tamilnadu’s sovereignty (*eer’anmai*) is propagated by activists as demanding the release of all those imprisoned in the Rajiv assassination case. Jennings (2011) illuminates how sovereignty is conceptualized as being of two principle types, the constitutive power of the people or a nation and that of constituted power, e.g. the nation state which is the sovereign constituted political body. The nation and its people are viewed within left winged post-enlightenment political traditions as those who possess the constitutive powers to invest the state with sovereignty and legitimacy to govern them and an given territory. I argue that the Tamilnadu activists’ concept of the ‘democratic will’ and sentiments of the Tamilnadu people as separate and independent of the constituted power of the Indian nation-state represent their understanding of the Tamils to be an constitutive power and an nation.



In addition to the three mentioned above, four more Tamils have been incarcerated since 1991, including the Indian Tamil wife of Murugan. Tamilnadu activists and nationalists allege that the imprisoned Tamils were falsely convicted in the assassination case trials under dubious circumstances. The various activities organized towards the release of the seven Tamils have since 2011 become a significant component of the general agitation for Eelam in Tamilnadu and provide an apt illustration of the tension involved in the dynamic between national and Tamil narratives as well as the multiple campaigns which are intertwined in the engagement for Eelam. Through this campaign, anti-death penalty rhetoric was weaved into the larger Eelam-solidarity movement and the discourses of Tamilness.

The campaign was revamped in 2011, when the Central government ordered their execution on September 9th. I was present in Chennai during the period when the verdict was passed. Throughout Tamilnadu, foremostly in Chennai, various organizations and political parties staged demonstrations over the next few weeks condemning the verdict. Despite the popular opposition by Tamil activists and political parties the Supreme Court upheld their verdict. There was yet another event which intensified the activists' protests. Twenty-one year old activist Senkodi, self-immolated in protest of the execution order. She was a member of the Marxist Makkal Mandram (People's Forum) organization, and had been a prolific

activist anguished by the oppression of Eelam Tamils. On the 28th of August 2011 in Kanchipuram city, she ran into the district government office (Taluk office) and shouted for the release of the Tamils before she set her body ablaze. She later succumbed to her extensive burn injuries and died in hospital. Her self-immolation led several political parties and student and youth movements involved in the agitation for Eelam to mobilize people across the state into demonstration against the Supreme Court order and the Central government. Her comrades at the Makkal Mandram handed over her suicide note to the media, which stated that she was following Muttukumar, and in the attempt to save the lives of the Tamils awaiting execution, she would self-immolate and sacrifice herself. In another protest organized in the aftermath of Senkodi's death, four female Tamil lawyers went on a three day long hunger strike. I noted the slogans the female and male student activists shouted:

“Release the seven Tamils, Indian government do not interfere in the sovereignty of Tamilnadu, ...If the three Tamils are hanged, we will throw away the Indian identity and become Tigers”

Meanwhile students and activists involved in the pro-Eelam solidarity decided to bring Senkodi's body from her native village in Kanchipuram to the venue in North Chennai where the hunger strike was taking place in order to intensify the emotional atmosphere. The state police put up a blockade, and demanded that the funeral procession return back to her native village.

Although state authorities are seemingly relatively tolerant of agitation for Eelam due to its political influence in the state, tension and conflict with the Tamil agitators also exists. Several of my interlocutors would point out the ‘sabotage’ during Muttukumar's funeral procession, as well as the closing off of colleges during heightened student activism in April 2013 as indications of the state government and dominant political parties' involvement in a parallel process, while publically supporting the politics of the pro-Eelam activists, to control or contain the agitation for Eelam. Since pro-Eelam sentiments propagated by the independent solidarity movement are influential among the public, expressing support to such sentiments was also a determining factor for the popularity and mass appeal of dominant stakeholders, e.g. DMK and ADMK, in the state electoral system. Consequently the transformative effects of the political engagement for Eelam within Tamilnadu are poignant. A testimony to this is that Tamilnadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha, led the state crackdown on the LTTE and Eelam sympathizers during the 1990s, and was until 2010 renowned as anti-

LTTE and against the politics of Eelam. However following the growth and popularity of the independent Eelam-solidarity movement, she became historic in presiding over several state assembly resolutions in favor of Eelam. In the aftermath of the protests following Senkodi's death the state legislative assembly unanimously passed a resolution calling for clemency for the three Tamils awaiting death row on 30th August 2011.

Indian National Discourse

Regarding the assassination case and the agitation surrounding it, Indian national media and the Central state propagated national narratives which illustrate the overall conflict between Indianess and Tamilness. On the same day the 2011 Tamilnadu state assembly resolution for the release of the three Tamils was passed, NDTV, a popular national English news channel aired a news report followed by a debate on the issue under the title '*Rajiv murder: Politics triumph over Justice*'. One of the chief guests was Subramaniam Swamy, a persona highly disliked by the activists. He is a known articulator of national discourse, previous leader of the Janata Party and now chairman for the BJP committee for strategic action, and also appointed to advise the government on foreign policy including towards Sri Lanka. The reigning Supreme Court Judge under the Rajiv -assassination trials and a spokeswoman for the Congress party also appeared. The debate title itself reflects the precursor of the national discourse- the agitations are 'politics' implying manipulations and populist appeal versus the 'apolitical' justice represented by the Indian state and judicial institutions. An interesting aspect is that whilst propagators of Tamil discourses view the Indian state, its discourses, narrations and identity politics as problematic, the state, national media and their spokespersons view Tamil national politics and agitation as 'anti-national' and irrational. The Indian state through national discourses projects a narration of the agitation in Tamilnadu as being driven by emotionalism and 'corrupt politics', invalidating the socio-political context of Tamil sentiments and the political literacy of Tamilnadu activists. Tamil activists claim this is entirely deliberate and generated by the ideological component of Brahmanism informing the Indian national discourse. From an anthropological perspective, I argue that this is an epistemological process where the Indian state seeks, in Foucault's terms (1977), to exercise power over and discipline the Tamil political resistance. Through such remarks the activists are interpreting and reproducing historic continuity in the friction between the (North) Indian/Brahmanical nation and the Tamil nation. Conflict is by Tamil activist

conceived as stemming from historic times, continuing through the colonial and post-colonial to the present.

The well-known television anchor who led the program, Barkha Dutt emphasized that justice on behalf of Rajiv is falling victim to emotionalism and politics in Tamilnadu. Janata Party's Subramanian Swamy strengthens this opinion and remarks that the Tamilnadu assembly action reflects cowardice. Dutt also asked the Congress Spokesman Renuka Chaudry, if she, as an Indian citizen, feels disturbed that a State Assembly could vote to give clemency to the murderers of the nation's Prime Minister. During my fieldwork, I also observed on numerous occasions frequent advertisements in Headlines Today of their new “investigative report into the Rajiv assassination case, stating that it includes the never before revealed diary of the now dead main plotter Sivarasan”. One of the TV channel presenters then reveals that “Sivarasan’s diary is crucial in nailing the seven accused that the Tamilnadu government wants to release”.

The Indian national media and state-centric narrations prove to be conflictual with the epistemology and activity of the agitating Tamils. This implies a process of polarization between Tamil narrations and those associated with the Indian nation. Likewise Tamilnadu activists juxtapose Indianess with Tamilness, resulting in the crystallization of friction and differences between the centre and the periphery.

Centre – State Relation

The Indian union is federal in nature, yet since independence the relation between the Central government in the Hindi heartland and the state governments in the non-Hindi speaking hinterland has been characterized by tension, co-option and negotiation. There is a range of academic literature dealing with the state – center aspect of the Indian state in length (Sathyamurthy 2010;Chatterjee 2010). Literature shows that Tamilnadu captures a significant role, as the DMK is hailed as the first ‘regional’ political party which effectively challenged the Centre after its electoral triumph in 1967. It is a widely held notion that the DMK under C.N. Annadurai disturbed the established Centre-state relation, which up to that point had been dominated by the Congress and New Delhi. However following the re-organization of the states, the Centre has through economic and political means circumscribed the actions of individual states.

Since then Congress has retained its position within Tamilnadu by functioning as the ‘king maker’ in state elections ensuring the decisive majority to either the DMK or later the ADMK front. From 1967 to 2009 Congress utilized co-option tactics to toe in line the regional party in charge in Tamilnadu and the period has generally been understood as one of stability and cooperation. However, since 2009 and the Mulli’vaykal massacre which mobilized the solidarity movement for Eelam, a new phase in the state – Center relations is evident in which the Centre faces an unprecedented challenge.

It was the DMK – Congress alliance in the United Peoples Alliance (UPA) which controlled the state during and in the immediate aftermath of the Mulli’vaykal massacres. As described in other chapters, the students clearly identified the DMK and Congress as the causes for 1) allowing Mulli’vaykal to unfold, 2) containing the sentiments and agitation in Tamilnadu. Nevertheless the pro-Eelam solidarity movement brought about an agitation compelling the state authorities and political parties to accommodate the demands put forth on the streets as part of state politics. The political influence and the popular appeal of the solidarity movement can be clearly attested from the historic defeat of both the DMK and the Congress in the 2011 state elections. The ADMK takes power, and its leader Jayalalitha, steps in as the new Chief Minister. Aware of the political power wielded by the Eelam solidarity movement over public opinion in the state, Jayalalitha began increasingly to advocate the politics of Eelam as part of state policy making. The activists stressed that this was a pragmatic measure to capitalize on Eelam solidarity and also ensure that Jayalalitha was not at the receiving end of Tamil nationalist sentiments present in the state due to pro-Eelam sentiments.

The agitation for Eelam, can be argued to have *broadened the democratization of politics*, as the democratic sentiment of the Tamilnadu people propagated by Tamil activists in political mobilization for Eelam, influenced electoral politics and political parties who in turn mobilized the larger public in Tamilnadu. This in turn conditioned the constitution of state-Centre relations, as exemplified when the Tamilnadu Chief Minister supported by various Tamil political parties and the state assembly endorses political stands, resolutions and statements which either criticize, edify or demand the Centre to respect the “sentiment of the Tamil people” towards Eelam.

The consistent boycott of all national parties following Mulli’vaykal, enhanced a political tradition in Tamilnadu in which national parties were held in suspicion by political actors *visa vis* Tamil interests. This atmosphere resulted in the Tamil Dravidian parties such

as the DMK, ADMK and other off-shoots in becoming dominant political parties in the state. With the Eelam agitation the national parties have significantly been reduced in terms of influence in the state assembly. The state election which followed in 2014 April saw the BJP's unprecedented success in a majority of Indian states and was titled the 'Modi wave'. In contrast the Tamilnadu state assembly election which followed witnessed an overwhelming victory hauled in by the incumbent ADMK party. Out of thirty nine seats, thirty seven were won by the ADMK while the BJP secured only two seats.

The ADMK and then CM Jayalalitha, had incorporated the demand for an international investigation into genocide against Sri Lanka and a referendum for free Eelam in the party election manifesto. This was significant since the Indian state had categorically stated that it was against such measures and rather favoured domestic processes to facilitate autonomy for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The ADMK election manifesto and the solidarity movements' boycott of the BJP led to the ADMK securing an overwhelming triumph, despite the 'Modi wave'. The state–Centre relation was effectively challenged by the electoral victory of the ADMK by propagating issues which the Centre deemed against national interest.

The Activists and Indo-Lanka Relations

For my interlocutors, the national parties represented the Indian foreign policy and state support to Sri Lanka, which they were protesting against due to the crimes against Eelam Tamils. It was Tamil centered interests which motivated Tamil activists in Tamilnadu to undertake extensive measures to ensure that national parties such as Congress and BJP would be unable to win votes in various constituencies in Tamilnadu. From the Indian state and media perspective, the relationship with Sri Lanka is deemed important and of national interest. Accordingly the Indian state has during and since Mulli'vaykal, pursued increased interaction with Colombo in terms of military, economic and socio-cultural cooperation despite the protests against such policy in Tamilnadu. From New Delhi to the streets of Tamilnadu there are two conflicting political positions made evident regarding the Sri Lankan state and Eelam Tamils. The Centre earned resentment among activists due to its policy and actions in support of Sri Lanka, deemed as anti-Tamil and deliberately apathetic. The Indian national media in turn frequently reports of prospering relations with Sri Lanka. War ships sold, borrowed or gifted to Colombo, Sri Lankan military personnel trained in a military

academy in Wellington, Tamilnadu, and joint military training between the two armed forces are reproduced in national media as normalized state to state interaction. The activists would often criticize and deconstruct the national media and its discourse during personal and public meetings. It becomes clear that the strain between the Tamil collective and the Indian collective is also traceable to the period of Periyar and the DK.

Conversations with my interlocutors on past incidents compelled me to research through news archives the Indo-Lanka relations and the agitation in the past few years. I supplemented my fieldwork with previously collected magazines, newspapers and clip-outs from national Indian media, and through this research I was able to trace the tendencies in the state centric narrations. The Tamil activists' allegations against the national media as deliberately maligning their agitation did not seem far-fetched. From an anthropological perspective, the national discourses present a process of epistemological violence of the ruling classes of the 'nation' towards those who challenge their 'order' from the 'periphery'. Through these discourses carried in national media, in Foucaultian terms, the national elite in Delhi attempts to invalidate and discipline Tamil 'resistance' and discourse, subsequently to exercise power by containing and circumventing them. The activists involved in the engagement towards Eelam have staged conventions and meetings towards tackling such a problematic dimension to their political engagement.

Another interesting aspect regarding the epistemological violence and power of the national discourse, is that many of the students remarked how their own families and friends would dissuade them from engaging towards Eelam and joining the agitation. Even veteran activists like Kumar, Xavier and MR.S said that their parents, influenced by the state and media narrations of the Eelam liberation struggle, would argue with them over the support to the latter. The word terrorism is associated with the proscribed LTTE in national discourse which spreads hesitation, fear and suspicion among many in Tamilnadu in supporting Eelam.

Conclusion

What can be observed through the pro-Eelam agitations and in particular the campaigns for the release of the seven accused in the Rajiv assassination, is that there is a multifaceted conflict and strain between political activists of Tamilnadu, the state government and the Indian Central state. It is necessary to conceptualize the conflict in two broad forms: 1) On a bureaucratic level, there is a tug of war between the state and the Center, and the contemporary agitation is reminiscent of the challenges posed in the 1960s 2) On a socio-political level, there is tension between Tamil national consciousness/imagination and Tamil identity with North/Hindi Indian national narrative and identity.

For the national media and by extension the Indian public opinion, the accused Tamils are terrorists and the assassinated Rajiv Gandhi 'the soul of the nation'. For the Tamils on the streets, the convicted/accused are political prisoners and the ex-PM identified as responsible for human rights violation against the Eelam Tamil people during the IPKF occupation. The positions are two worlds apart, and the contradictions apparent, thus the Indian state along with the national media and the agitating Tamils are polarized.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Transnational and Nationalist Engagement

In this study I have elucidated the transnational political engagement of Tamilnadu activists towards Eelam Tamils and their nationalist orientations concerning their own state, that of Tamilnadu. As argued in the thesis, this sort of engagement beyond its nationalist overtone is transnational in that it concerns and centres on a related ethnic kin group. It is neither state centred or banal nationalism, nor a political engagement grounded in the unification of a territory with an established political-legal entity, e.g. such as in the case of Greek Megali Idea or Cypriot Turks seeking unification with Turkey. The concept of long distance nationalism also proves inadequate, as the subjects in the study are neither migrants living in the West, nor individuals considered as belonging to the same political-national entity as the Eelam Tamils. They form a peculiar category; the Tamilnadu Tamils form a transnational component in a transnational political engagement oriented towards the political cause for Eelam. The sustained agitation for Eelam in Tamilnadu provides an interesting study which may contribute to the understanding of nationalism, transnationalism, political activism and identity in a globalizing era. A limited study of contemporary Tamil transnational politics centred on Eelam illuminates a few challenges to the dominant academic study of nationalism. The progressive aspects of nationalism, such as the bridging of social differences and principles of equity and social progress, tend to be overlooked in contemporary anthropological and academic literature.

Identity

In the phenomenon studied, Tamil cosmology proved to be central in the constitution of contemporary political orientations and a Tamil identity overarching previous prevalent markers of social differences in Tamilnadu. Tamil nationalist and Eelam oriented political traditions influence my interlocutors' conceptions of the world and in particular the conceptualization of Tamilness, Tamil identity and India. The Tamilnadu activists interpreted and politically engaged towards events at regional, national, and international levels relating

to Sri Lanka with implication for the social processes of identity construction among Tamils in Tamilnadu. The interpretations and narrations of such events by the Indian national media and the Indian state were juxtaposed with those of Tamil activists and their transnational bonds. Richard Jenkins (2008) underlines that identity is not something which one has or not, but is rather a multidimensional process of identification which intersects with the manner we order and categorize the world, and how we relate to these categories as individuals and members of a collective. In a similar vein Tamilness, the political identities associated with Tamil nationalist and transnationalist orientations, proved to be something which is practiced rather than merely ascribed or absolute. The activism and discourses elaborated upon by activists seemed to represent this process of identification and negotiation. Rather than based simply on heritage, adherence or support for Eelam and Tamilnadu nationalist sentiments seemed to be decisive in the process of practicing Tamilness.

Student Agitation and Continuity

The student agitation for Eelam has been sustained over the course of five years, and differs from traditional student movements, such as in the case of the 1968 Paris student agitation which was explosive but short-lived. The fact that student identity is transient renders political engagement liable to be limited over time and space unless aligned with other political or social institutions.

The Paris agitation of 1968, lacking political institutions or patronage was an example of this limitation. In contemporary Tamilnadu the continuation of the students' political engagement was assured by the student movements interlocking with broader social movements and political parties engaging towards Eelam and Tamil nationalism (Jayapalan 2013).

The independent student agitation within the larger Eelam solidarity movement has sustained political action since 2011 due to its alignment with an infrastructure and forms of social capital provided by social organizations, political parties in Tamilnadu and information provided through transnational channels. Nationalistic orientation towards Eelam and local state issues induced students to politically engage even after completion/discontinuation of their education. This sort of national and transnational orientation in the case of Tamilnadu students implies that their political engagement is not oriented towards immediate material advantages or economic policy, as in the case of the Paris student upheaval. A section of my

interlocutors who previously were students but at the point of my fieldwork had full-time careers within the IT sector, exemplify this point by continuing their engagement.

The resilience of the students' political engagement was also facilitated by a conducive environment provided by shared Tamil history and cosmology. The politics of Eelam, awareness of Mulli'vaykal and socio-political issues of Tamilnadu are communicated by activists to the larger public and student community through cultural forms and ideas of ethnicity and nation. Within the structural-functionalist models applied by sociologists, this is referred to as 'structural conduciveness', which postulates that certain configuration of social structure can facilitate the grounds for new or revitalized forms of collective political behaviour and mobilization.

Due to its salience in the Eelam solidarity movement and for the interpretation of the 'life world' of my interlocutors, I have throughout the study emphasised contextualization and subsequently given accounts of the political, historical and social layers that shape and inform their social actions and conceptions. In order to engage the phenomenon for analytical purposes I have investigated critical events and their role in shaping the actions and thoughts of the interlocutors. In this regard, sociology and its analytical approaches to social movements exemplified through social movement analysis and structural-functionalist models proved fruitful in combination with anthropological methods.

Transnationalism and Globalization

In the wake of contemporary processes of accelerated globalization, predictions of the emergence of a post-national scenario have been looming large in academia (Eriksen 2002). This prediction is based on the premises that nationalism and the nation-state and its constituted sovereignty will cease. Benedict Anderson (1991) noted that the prophesized demise of nationalism is "not remotely in sight" (Eriksen 2002:98-99). Anderson termed this the anomaly of nationalism, that solidarity based on common origins and culture persist in an individualist and post-enlightenment world (Nimmi 1991). Appadurai (1991) has pointed out how transnational bonds and integration can transcend the nation-state which in classical study on ethnicity, has principally been viewed as the 'eminent power container', whilst post-modernist and post-structuralist views tend to view 'primordial loyalties' as decreasing in the wake of globalization for new transnational identities (Eriksen 2002: 163-164; Giddens 1991;

Wallerstein 1991). While many agree that the constituted powers, i.e. established nation-states have a lessened capacity to discipline or circumvent cross-border, economic, transnational and inter-cultural processes of contact, the significance of common origin, ethnicity and cultural connectedness in the dynamics of transnational interaction, identities and bonds are often neglected. Eriksen writes that Friedman (1991) has referred to such a phenomenon as life-practice of the Fourth World (Eriksen 2002:168) The revolution in information and transport technology exhibited through the internet, social media, mass media, and economic commercial flights is broadening globalization processes (Eriksen 2002:165). The dissemination of information and communication technology further facilitates transnational interaction and orientations among the various 'imagined communities' and the constitutive sovereignties' of the world. In other words there is a parallel process of globalization and localization (Eriksen 2002:165-170). The very broadening of the globalization process implies that other actors are utilizing these cross-border processes, instead of remaining largely in the service of multi-national companies, international NGOs and corporate media. Thus ethno-cultural allegiances and collectives rather than being disintegrated seem to benefit from such an environment (Eriksen 2002).

An illustration of such dimensions is provided by a brief analysis of the recent history of the transnational linkages between Tamils in Sri Lanka and India. Political parties and activists from Tamilnadu espoused solidarity to Tamils in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the 1983 anti-Tamil pogroms which Kapferer (1988:79) referred to as a ritualized violence grounded in Sinhala myth and nationalism. This was in stark contrast to the 1977 anti-Tamil pogroms in Sri Lanka, which elicited no or little response from political actors in Tamilnadu. During the 1980s, regional political dynamics resulted in the Indian Central and Tamilnadu governments arming and training Eelam Tamil militants on Indian soil. This coupled with globalization processes such as broader telecommunication and strengthening of transnational cultural bonds engendered increased flow of information, interaction and people from Sri Lanka to Southern India. Subsequently Tamilnadu espoused solidarity to Eelam Tamils through an identity of 'victimized kin' and Tamilness. Following the assassination of ex-Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the resulting criminalization by the Indian state and national media of the Eelam struggle, the transnational solidarity subdued. In Tamilnadu, following the 1990s, the identities of Eelam Tamils and the perceptions of them among Indian Tamils were subject to a paradigm shift from being 'victimised kin' to 'potential terrorists' (Paus 2005). In the wake of Mulli'vaykal, there is arguably a revitalization of

transnational interaction among the Tamils of India and Sri Lanka. The Eelam Tamils are now conceptualized once more as a brutalized ethnic kin in need of solidarity.

Conclusion

What drives Tamilnadu Tamils, in particular the activists, in engaging as they do towards Eelam Tamils? What are the conditions which effectuate such an engagement in the contemporary world? It is imperative to address these questions to comprehend the continuity of the phenomenon I have studied in this thesis. Anthropological methodology and analysis has been essential in shedding light on the activists' point of view, their ideas, conceptions, motives, goals, political orientations and the cultural dimensions which address the above mentioned questions. The political history and cosmology of the Tamil region in India shows that Tamil nationalist traditions, the plight of Eelam and transnational bonds with Tamils in Sri Lanka are crucial factors in ushering Tamilnadu Tamils into activism for their ethnic kin.

Since the 1980s and especially since 2009 in the case of Tamils of India and Sri Lanka, there has been a dynamic transnational interaction between the two, embodied through political solidarity, nationalistic sentiments and cultural connectedness. The study of transnationalism among culturally and ethnically related people is warranted and anthropology can provide crucial insights in understanding contemporary political engagement among transnationalist and nationalist social movements. Anthropological methods with a focus on the study of socio-political history, political structure and environment of present action can illuminate political action and thought in the contemporary era in order to situate the orientations, meaning and actions of collective action and political movements (Porta and Diani 2006). In addition to elucidating what propels Tamilnadu Tamils towards engaging in solidarity with Eelam Tamils, the phenomenon I have studied may also contribute towards an understanding of the conditions for ethno-national political engagement in the world today.

Appendix 1

“ The Indian government proves to be pursuing an foreign policy favourable to the Sinhalese, even after 80 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu have expressed that Rajapakse should not be allowed to visit India, our head of state repeatedly reiterate that Sri Lanka is an friendly nation, and that we will continue to invite them, to provide them military training. This has had the effect of being nothing less than deepening our (Tamils) wounds. Thereby under no circumstances, shall these Sinhala genocidaires be allowed to enter Indian Territory. I wish to register here that such is the resolute sentiment of the Tamil Nadu people. We demand an International independent Inquiry..... Moreover, on behalf of Tamil Nadu we are also demanding that the Indian government has to announce it boycott of the anticipated CHOGM to be held in Colombo.

If they (**India**) are going to continue stating that they cannot risk their relations with Sri Lanka by accommodating the sentiments of Tamil Nadu, it will create an atmosphere in which the youth of Tamil Nadu will realize that India is not their nation. A situation will arise in which they can say that they are not Indians. What such intransigence will accommodate is that you (**India**) will have instigated problems in Tamil Nadu for yourself. There (**In Eelam**), to ensure that more Pirabahakaran's won't be created, they cold bloodedly murdered his son 12 year old Balachandran. The photos of his execution and his death are the symbols indicating that what happened in Eelam was genocide. He was not armed nor a fighter, like him they have butchered thousands of children, women and elderly. For Balachandran, who met the bullets to his chest, I am indebted to proclaim my Veervanakkam to him. So Indian government! If you are going to repeat historical mistakes, using the pretext of preventing China or Pakistan from gaining foothold to humiliate us and to praise you're relation with the Sinhalese government, it implies being complicit with genocidal Sri Lanka. Is the Indian government in its foreign policy seeking to lose Tamil Nadu and to safeguard Indo-Lanka relations? If not the foreign policy has to change.

Indian government has a duty to ensure independent international investigation against Sri Lanka.....If not the Indian government will be forced to bear the cost of a great historical failure. Indian government will face a great historical challenge. Like Eelam Tamils, Tamilakam Tamils will also be forced to struggle towards demanding an independent Tamil Nadu. The Indian government should ensure such a situation from not occurring.

Today Tamil youths are proclaiming Tamil Nadu as their homeland, if you want them to call India as such, then it is imperative that your foreign policy changes and that you realize that an independent Tamil Eelam is the only durable political solution to Eelam Tamils. “

Bibliography

Abeyesinge, T.. 2005. *Jaffna under the Portuguese*. Lake House Investment Ltd. Book Publishers, Colombo.

Appadurai, A. 1991. "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a transnational Anthropology" in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (ed.). Fox. G.R... :191-210. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Abu-Lughod, L. (1991) 2006."Writing against culture". in *Anthropology in Theory. Issues in Epistemology* (ed.) H. Moore and T. Sanders, 466-479. Blackwell Publishing.

Aroonan, K.N 1980. *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian nationalism, 1905-1944*. Koodal publishers, Madurai.

Anaimuthu, V. 1974. *Periyar Ee Ve Ra Sinthanaikal*. Vol II, Thinkers forum, Thiruchipalli(Tamil).

Anderson, B. 1992 "*Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism And The Rise Of Identity Politics*" In The Wertheim Lecture 1992: Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam

Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso Pub 1991

Anderson, D.L. 2013. *Federal Solutions to Ethnic Problems: Accommodating Diversity*. Routledge.

Aloysius, G. 1998. *Nationalism without a Nation in India* : New Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Bergunder, M. 2004. "Contested Past: Anti Brahmanica and Hindu reconstruction of Indian prehistory" in *Historiographia linguistia*. Vol 31 : 59-104

Billig, M.1995: *Banal Nationalism*. Sage Publications.

- Bourdieu, P. 1985. 'The Forms of Capital'. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, (ed.) by J. G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Chatterjee P. 2010 'Introduction: A Political History of Independent India', in *State and Politics in India: themes in Politics* (ed.) by Chatterjee P. Oxford University Press.
- Clifford, J.1994: 'Diasporas', in *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 302 – 38
- Clifford, J. 1997. *Routes, travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.
- Crehan, K. 2002 *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*. University of California Press
- Cohen, A. 1974 'Introduction: The Lessons of ethnicity' in *Urban Ethnicity* (ed), Cohen, A. : ix –xxii.: London, Tavistock.
- Eriksen, T.H. 2002. *Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Second edition. Anthropological Perspectives: Pluto Press
- Faist, T. 1998. 'Transnational Social Spaces Out of International Migration: Evolution, Significance and Future Projects' in *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 39, Issue: 2: 217-247
- Faist, T. 2000. *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Pantheon
- Fuglerud, Ø. 1999. *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long Distance Nationalism*. Pluto Press.
- Fuglerud, Ø. 2011. "The Aesthetics of Martyrdom: The Celebration of Violent Death among the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam" in *Violence expressed* (ed.)Weiss, A and Six-Hohenbalken, M. Ashgate Publishing Farham : 71-90
- Gellner, E. 2006: *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell[1983]
- Giddens, A. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Cambridge: Polity
- Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. (ed.) Hoare, Q. and Smith, N,G: London: Lawrence and Wishart.

- Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. 1997. "Discipline and Practice: 'The Field' as Site, Method and Location in Anthropology." In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of A Field Science* (ed.) Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1-46.
- Gupta, C and Sharma, M. 2008. *Contested Coatlines: Fisherfolk, Nations and Borders in South Asia* : New Delhi, Routledge
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Trans.) Burger, T. Cambridge Massachusetts.
- Handler, R. and Segal, D. 1992: 'How European is nationalism?' in *Social Sciences* , Vol. 32 : 1-15.
- Indrapala, K. 2006. *THE EVOLUTION OF AN ETHNIC IDENTITY: THE TAMILS IN SRI LANKA c. 300 BCE TO C. 1200 CE*. Kumaran Book House, Chennai.
- Jackson, M. 2005. "The Course of An Event" in *Existential Anthropology: Events, Exigencies and Effects*, Methodology and History in Anthropology Volume 11 New York: Berghahn Books: chapter 1, 1-14.
- Jayapalan, V.I.S. 2013 (Tamil) "Tamilnaadu Maanavar Poratte Pinnaniyum – sile Koothpaatu kelvikalum" (Online) 12th April 2013 in *Puthinappalakai*. DOI: 20130410108083
- Jennings, C.R. 2011. 'Sovereignty and Political modernity: A genealogy of Agamben's Critique of Sovereignty' in *Anthropological Theory II*. (Available online) DOI: 10.1177/1483499610395443
- Kailasapaty, K. 1968: Tamil Heroic Poetry. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Kapferer, B. 1988. *Legends of People, Myths of State, violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. London, Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Kjeldstadli, Knut. 2008. *Sammensattesamfunn. Innvandring og Inkludering*. Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Kothari, R. 1990. "Introduction" in *Caste in Indian Politics* (ed.) Kothari, R. 5th edition 1991. Published by Orient Longman Limited.
- Kurotani, S. 2004."Multi-sited Transnational Ethnography and the Shifting Construction of Fieldwork. In *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation*. (eds.), Hume, Lynne and J.Mulcock New York: Columbia University Press: 201-215.

- Lemkin, R. 1946. "Genocide" in *American Scholar*, Volume 15, no. 2 (April) : 227-230
- Leary, V. 1981 *Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka - Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists, July/August 1981*. Geneva: International Commission of Jurist
- Marcus, G.E and Fischer, M.M.J. 1986. "Ethnography and interpretative anthropology". *Anthropology as Cultural critique*. The University of Chicago Press: 17-44
- McAdam, D. and Fernandez, R. 1990: 'Microstructural Bases of Recruitment to Social Movements'. in *Research In Social Movements, Conflict and Change* (ed.) L. Kriesberg, vol. 12.Greenwich, CT: JAI Press : 1-33
- McAdam, D. and Paulsen, R. 1993: 'Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism'. In *American Journal of Sociology*, 99:640-67.
- Nimni, E. 1991. *Marxism and Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press
- Nash, M. 1988: *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Navaratnam, V. 1996 "*The Rise and fall of the Tamil Nation*" :Kaanthalakam
- Pandian, MSS. Kalaiarasan, A. 2013 " A Tamil spring?" in *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol.- XLVIII No. 15. April.
- Pandian, M.S.S. 1996 "Towards National-popular : The Self-Respecters Tamil' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.31, No. 51 (Dec.21, 1996) : 3323-3329. Economic and Political Weekly
- Pandian, M.S.S. 2005."Void and memory: the story of a statue on Chennai beachfront", in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol.6, No.03. Routledge.
- Paus, N. 2005. *Strained Fraternity: Identity Formations, Migration and Social Transformation Among Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu, India*: PHD, University of Bergen.
- Peebles, P. 1990. "Colonization and Ethnic conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka" in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 49(1). Association For Asain Studies. : 30-55

- Periyar, E.V.R. 2007. "The Tamil Language" in *Collected Works of Periyar E.V.R.* compiled by Dr.K.Veeramani (Fourth edition). The Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution, Chennai.
- Periyar. 1983. *Dear Youths!*. Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution, Chennai.
- Periyar. 2013. *Caste should be destroyed – Why?*. Dravidar Kazhagam, Chennai.
- Ponnambalam, S. 1983. *Sri Lanka : The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle*. London: Zed Books.
- Porta.D and Diani, M. 2006. *Social Movement: An Introduction*. (Second Edition). Blackwell Publishing
- Pinto, R.P. 2006: 'Social Capital as a Capacity for Collective Action' in *Assessing social capital: concept, policy, practice* (ed.) Edwards, R., Franklin, J and Holland, J. Cambridge Scholars Press
- Portes, Alejandro 2001. "Introduction: the debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism". In *Global Networks*. Vol.1, Issue 3 : 181-193
- Ravikumar 2005. "Introduction: Waiting to Lose their Patience" in *Dalits in Dravidian Land: Frontline Reports on Anti-Dalit Violence in Tamil Nadu (1995-2004)* by S. Viswanathan. Narayana Publishing: 11-38(xi-xxxviii).
- Rengeswamy, M. 2006. *Tamil Nationalism: Political identity of the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam*. HEMA Publishers.
- Rudolph, I.L. 1961 "Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras" in *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol.20, No.3. (May, 1961) : 283 -297
- Safran, W. 1991: 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', in *Diaspora* Vol.1: 83 – 99
- Sathananthan, S. 1995 "*The Peace Trap*" (available online) *Tamilnation* July 1995.
- Sathyamurthy T.V. 2010. "Ch.6: Impact of Centre-State Relations on Indian Politics: An Interpretative Reckoning 1947-1987", *State and Politics In India: themes in politics* in (ed.) Chatterjee P. Oxford University Press.

- Schalk, P. 1997 “ The Revival of the Martyrs Cult Among Ilavar” in *Temenos*, 33 :150 -190.
- Senaratne, J. P. 1997. *Political Violence in Sri Lanka, 1997-1990: Riots, Insurrections, counter-insurgencies, Foreign Intervention, Amsterdam*. VU University Press.
- Settar, S. and Sontheimer, G.D. (ed.) 1982: *Memorial Stones*. Dharwad: Institute of Indian Art History.
- Sieghart, P. 1984. *Sri Lanka: A Mounting Tragedy of Errors* - Report of International Commission of Jurists 1984
- Smelser, N. J. 1962: *Theory of Collective Behavior*. New York: The Free Press.
- Suntharalingam, R. 1980. *Politics and Nationalist awakening in South India, 1852-1891* , Rawat Publications, Jaipur- Delhi.
- Srinivas, M.N. 1952. *Religion and Society Amongst the Coorgs of South India* Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Tambiah, S.J. 1986. *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and Dismantling of Democracy*. London. L. Tauris and Co Ltd.
- Tambiah, S.J. 1992. *Buddhism Betrayed?: religion, politics and violence in Sri Lanka*. A Monograph if the World Institute for Development Economic Research (WIDER) of the United Nations University. University of Chicago Press.
- Thandavan, R. 1987. *All India Anna Dravida Munnetra kazhagam: Political Dynamics in Tamil Nadu*. Published by Tamil Nadu Academy of Political Science, Madras.
- Tharmalingam, S. 2011. “Mapping Tamil Transnational Politics: Past, Present and Future.” In *Diaspora Dialogues for Development and Peace Project*, Berlin: Berghof Peace Support/Luzern: Centre For Just Peace and Democracy.
- Thiagu 2011. *Mullivaikkal: Before and After*. Second edition. Tamil Thesam publications.
- Veena, D. 1997. *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. Oxford University Press, India
- Vertovee, S. 2009. *Transnationalism: Key ideas*. London: Routledge.
- Vittachi, V.T. 1959. *Emergency '58: The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots* . A.Deutsch

Wallerstein, I. 1991. 'Does India exist?' in *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-century Paradigms*. (ed.) Wallerstein, I. Cambridge: Politiy

Wijesinha, R. 1986. *Current Crisis in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Navrang.

Wilson, A J. 1988. *The Break-up of Sri Lanka*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Worsley, P. 1984. *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development*. London, Weidenfeld and Nicholston

Woolcock, M. 1998. "Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework". in *Theory and Society* 27 (2):151-208.

Yael, N. 2002. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yelvington, K. 1991: 'Ethnicity as practice? A comment on Bentley'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.33 (1): 158-168.

Zvelebil, K. 1992 "Rediscovery of ancient Tamil literature: The Tamil Renaissance" 5th chapter in *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil literature*. Hanbuch Der Oreintalistik Series, Bill Academic publishers.

Internet sources

BBC. 2009, "Thousands on Tamil March" (Online) 11 April 2009.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/7994946.stm> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Hindu, 2013a "T.N assembly demands referendum on Eelam" (Online) *The Hindu* 28 March

2013 : <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/tn-assembly-demands-referendum-on-eelam/article4554161.ece> (accessed 29.04.2015)

Hindu, 2013b "Bank of Ceylon in Chennai Attacked"(Online). *The Hindu*. 8 February 2013 :

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/bank-of-ceylon-in-chennai-attacked/article4389598.ece> (accessed 23.05.2015)

Hindu. 2013c “CHOGM: Protests continues in districts ”.(Online). *The Hindu* 11 November 2013 <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/chogm-protests-continue-in-districts/article5337382.ece> (accessed 23.05.2015)

Petrie, C. 2012. *Report Of The Secretary-General’s Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action In Sri Lanka*. (online) available at: http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf (accessed 24.05.2015)

PPT, 2014. *Peoples’ Tribunal on Sri Lanka*. Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal and The International Human Rights Association. Bremen (Online) available at: http://www.ptsrilanka.org/images/documents/state_aided_sinhala_colonisation_en.pdf (accessed 24.05.2015)

Leslie.C.T. 2009. “Tamil support out in the open”, (Online) *Torontostar* 06.April.2009. http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2009/04/06/tamil_support_out_in_the_open.html (Accessed 06.05.2009)

Tamilnet. 2009a. “*Last statement of Muttukumar*”,(Online) 30.January 2009. <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?artid=28208&catid=79> (Accessed 06.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2009b “*Diaspora Tamil dies in self-immolation urging Obama to stop Colombo’s war*”, (Online) 08 February 2009: <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=28344> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2009c “*Eezham Tamil immolates himself to death in font of UN office in Geneva*”, (Online) 13.February. 2009. <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=28403> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2009d “*Poignant act of Self-immolation*”, (online) 14 February.2009. <http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=28412> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2009e. “*LTTE salutes sacrifice of Tamil Nadu Journalist Muthukumar*”.(online) 30 January 2009. <https://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=28210> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2015. “*Wigneswaran Calls for International Investigation into Genocide*”, (Online) 10. February. 2015. <https://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37634> (accessed 10.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2013a “*Unprecedented demonstrations In Tamil Nadu denounces empty resolutions at Geneva*” (Online) 21 March 2013. <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=36151> (accessed 23.02.2015)

Tamilnet. 2013b “*TN resolutions needs to be legally and politically binding: SP Udayakumar*” (Online) 30 March 2013. <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=36184> (accessed 23.02.2015).

Tamilnet. 2012 “*Self-Immolation protestor dies, anti-Rajapaksa agitations intensify in Tamil Nadu*” (Online) 19 September 2012 <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=35580> (accessed 11.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2014a. “*SL Military ridicules Mullu’vaykal Remembrance even in Temples*” (Online) 18 May 2014. <https://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=37220> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Tamilnet. 2014b. “*Mu’l’livaaykkaal Remembrance observed in Vanni*” (Online) 19 May 2014. <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=35195> (accessed 06.05.2015)

Veerasingham, R. 2014 “UN Envoy blames international community, neighbours for failing to protect Tamils” (Online) in *Journalist for Democracy in Sri Lanka* (JDS) 10. December 2014. <http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/news-features/human-rights/493-un-envoy-blames-intl-community-neighbours-for-failing-to-protect-tamils> (accessed 06.05.2015)