Tamil Cultural Orientation

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Chapter 1 Profile

Introduction

The Tamil people have a long and storied history in Sri Lanka. Although not indigenous to the island, the Tamils have been arriving in successive waves of immigration and conquest since the closing centuries of the first millennium B.C.E. They maintain close cultural and familial connections with the Tamils of India, more than 70 million of whom live in the neighboring Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil language is one of the two official languages of the island of Sri Lanka.

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Areial view of Jaffna & Vanni

From 1983 to 2009, Tamil secessionists fought an unsuccessful guerrilla war against the Sri Lankan government. During that war, Tamil militants, most prominently the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), resorted to terrorist tactics, including the assassination of elected officials in Sri Lanka and India. With the conclusion of the war, the Tamils, Sinhalese, and other ethnic groups of the island have the opportunity to set aside their differences and forge a new future for a unified, multiethnic state and civil society.

Geography

Area

An island in the Indian Ocean off the southeastern tip of India, Sri Lanka has an area of 65,610 sq km (25,588 sq mi). The areas over which the LTTE had control at any point during the civil war made up roughly 20,533 sq km (8,008 sq mi), nearly one-third of Sri Lanka. Although Tamils were historically the majority in only a fraction of that territory, the LTTE ruthlessly pursued a course of ethnic cleansing in the territory under its control.[1]

Geographic Division and Topographic Features

The Hill Country of the Central Highlands is the most elevated and coolest region on the island. Tea cultivation is a major agricultural pursuit there, and many Tamils work as tea pickers in the region. Located in the south-central part of the country, it is characterized by mountain forests with rich biodiversity and sacred spaces.[2]

Rising only slightly above sea level and replete with sparkling sand beaches, the island's coastal regions are the centerpiece of the country's tourist industry. Although the entire island has these coastal regions, those in the south and southwest of the island are the most developed.

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[1] Figures were extrapolated by using the statistics in the following work along with maps indicating lines of control during the war: B.H. Farmer, "Sri Lanka: Physical and Social Geography," in *Far East and Australasia, 2003*, 34th ed. (London: Europa Publications, 2002), 1346.
[2] Royston Ellis, *Sri Lanka* (Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 139–140.

The island's plains are widespread, including the low country, the Jaffna Peninsula, and the Vanni. The low country makes up the bulk of Sri Lanka's area and is climatically and geographically diverse. The Jaffna Peninsula is the northernmost region of the island. It is low-lying (below 300 m in elevation), flat, and watered primarily by underground aquifers. Most of the nation's Tamil population live in this area of Sri Lanka.[3, 4] By comparison, the Vanni makes up the mainland districts of the Northern Province. It is a densely forested region that is sparsely populated, mostly by Tamils. Historically, this area served as a buffer zone between the Tamil population of the north and the Sinhala and European colonials of the south.[5]

Climate

The Sri Lankan climate is tropical: hot and humid. The only exception is the Central Highlands, where the majority of the tea plantations are. In the low country and coastal areas, the mean annual temperature is about 27.5ºC (81.5ºF), compared to 18ºC (64.4ºF) in the hill country. Average rainfall on the island is 186 cm (73 in).[6] The southwest monsoons carry rain to the central, western, and southern regions from June to October, whereas the northeastern monsoons occur in the north and east from December to March. With its year-round comfortable temperatures, Sri Lanka attracts many tourists.[7]

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Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

Much of the land occupied by the Tamils is in the country's dry zone, which receives an annual rainfall of 175 cm (68 in). Though this represents ample rainfall, the region has no major river and has poor soil that makes tank-based irrigation difficult.[8]

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[3] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Sri Lanka: People: Ethnic Composition," 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/561906/Sri-Lanka/24279/The-people?anchor=ref388615
[4] Richard Green, ed., *The Commonwealth Yearbook, 2004* (London: The Stationery Office for the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003), 303.
[5] Donald E. Smith, "Religion, Politics, and the Myth of Reconquest," in *Modern Sri Lanka: A Society in Transition*, eds. Tissa Fernando et al. (Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1979), 83–100.
[6] Janaka Ratnasiri et al., "Vulnerability of Sri Lankan Tea Plantations to Climate Change," in *Climate Change and Vulnerability*, eds. Neil Leary et al. (London: Earthscan, 2008), 351–353.
[7] Government of Sri Lanka, "Sri Lanka Facts," 2009, http://www.gov.lk/gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&lang=en
[8] R. Sakthivadivel, Nihal Fernando, and Jeffrey D. Brewer, *Rehabilitation for Small Tanks in Cascades: A Methodology Based on Rapid Assessment* (research report, Colombo: International Irrigation Management Institute, 1997), 3–4.

Bodies of Water

Indian Ocean

The third-largest ocean in the world, the Indian Ocean has a history of strategic importance in geopolitics and trade. The Tamil people of Sri Lanka and India have long harnessed the bounty of the ocean for food and trade. Merchants from the Arabian Peninsula and beyond visited Sri Lanka in antiquity, following the regional trade routes that led to the island.[9]

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Indian Ocean

Bay of Bengal

The Bay of Bengal is a northeastern arm of the Indian Ocean along Sri Lanka's eastern coast. Many of the island's rivers flow into it. It ties Sri Lanka to its South Asian neighbors in India and Bangladesh.[10]

Palk Bay

Palk Bay is bounded on the west by India and on the east by the coast of Sri Lanka, Mannar Island, Adam's Bridge, and Pamban Island. This bay and its northern entrance, Palk Strait, factored prominently in the naval battles of the country's civil war; it was frequently used by the LTTE as a route for smuggling weapons and people to and from Sri Lanka.[11]

Palk Strait

The Palk Strait forms the northern entrance to Palk Bay and lies between the north coast of Sri Lanka and the east coast of India. This body of water was of strategic importance to the LTTE terrorists who used it as a route to smuggle weapons and people to and from Sri Lanka.

Gulf of Mannar

The Gulf of Mannar is a large shallow bay between the southeastern tip of India and the west coast of Sri Lanka. It is famous for its pearls and fisheries. The low coral islands spanning Sri Lanka and India, known as either Rama's Bridge or Adam's Bridge, are a distinguishing feature that separate the gulf from the Palk Strait.[12]

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[9] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Indian Ocean," 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/285876/Indian-Ocean
[10] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Bay of Bengal," 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/60740/Bay-of-Bengal
[11] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Palk Strait," 2011, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/439879/Palk-Strait
[12] Majid Husain, *Understanding Geographical Map Entries for Civil Services Examinations* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 2009), II.G.10–II.G.11.

Mahaweli Ganga

The Mahaweli Ganga is the longest river in Sri Lanka. It flows north through the Hatton and Kandy Plateaus. Since the late 1970s, a number of hydroelectric dams have been constructed to tap into the energy potential of the river. Its drainage basin covers nearly one-fifth of the island.[13]

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Mahaweli Ganga

Yan Oya

The Yan Oya River Basin stretches north between Anuradhapura and Trincomalee. The river is 142 km (88 mi) long and was a strategic waterway during the Sri Lankan civil war. This river is a vital source of water for irrigation tanks in an otherwise dry zone.[14]

Major Cities

Of the major cities in Sri Lanka, only Batticaloa has a large population of Tamils. This indicates just how sparsely populated much of the northern and eastern districts of the country are.

Colombo/Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte

Located on the west coast, Colombo and Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte serve as the combined capital of the island. The latter once served as the capital of the Kingdom of Kōṭṭe and was to become the new capital of Sri Lanka in the 1980s. However, while the parliament and some other government offices were moved to the city, most remain in Colombo, which is a port city where the Portuguese established their initial presence. Colombo has served as the capital since the mid-16th century. The two capital cities are part of the larger Colombo Urban Area, which has a population of more than 2.1 million.[15] Although not a Tamil city, the nation's capital Colombo has a sizable Tamil population that is 18.2% of its total.[16]

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[13] James R. Penn, *Rivers of the World: A Social, Geographical, and Environmental Sourcebook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 146–147.

[14] Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 3.

[15] Ravi Pereira, "Colombo: Institutionalizing an Environmental Management Strategy," Metropolitan Environmental Improvement Programme, United Nations Development Programme, n.d., http://ww2.unhabitat.org/programmes/uef/cities/summary/colombo.htm

[16] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Population by Ethnic Group and District, Census 1981, 2001," n.d., http://www.statistics.gov.lk/abstract2010/chapters/Chap2/AB2-11.pdf

Batticaloa

Situated on an island off the east coast, this city is a major trading center for the region and has large Tamil and Moor populations. It is connected to the mainland via bridges and ferries. The city has an estimated population of 88,459.[17]

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Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

Jaffna

The northernmost major city in Sri Lanka, Jaffna was the seat of an ancient Tamil kingdom and is considered a cornerstone of Tamil identity on the island. It was devastated and largely depopulated during the civil war. The city has an estimated population of 78,781.[18]

Vavuniya

A strategically important town, Vavuniya was deemed the gateway to the Vanni region. Consequently, it was the focus of many battles during the civil war. The city has an estimated population of 52,487.[19, 20]

Trincomalee

With one of South Asia's most spectacular deep-sea ports, Trincomalee is a major trade hub for the region and factors large in postwar development models. The port was once considered for a U.S. naval base; however, the onset of the civil war led to scrapping that plan. Today the city has an estimated population of 51,624.[21]

Kilinochchi

With an estimated population of only 15,300, Kilinochchi is barely a speck on the map.[22] But Kilinochchi served as the administrative center for the Tamil rebels during the Sri Lankan civil war. Residents completely abandoned the town in the closing days of the war as the

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

[17] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Basic Population Information on Batticaloa District—2007: Preliminary Report: Based on Special Enumeration—2007," October 2007, 14, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/Preliminary%20Reports%20Special%20Enumeration%202007/Basic%20Population%20Information%20of%20Batticaloa%20District%202007.pdf

[18] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Basic Population Information on Jaffna District—2007: Preliminary Report: Based on Special Enumeration—2007," June 2008, 14, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/Preliminary%20Reports%20Special%20Enumeration%202007/Basic%20Population%20Information%20on%20Jaffna%20District%202007.pdf

[19] City Population (firm), "Sri Lanka: Cities," 1 April 2010, http://www.citypopulation.de/SriLanka.html

[20] Figures are based on a 2007 estimate from the Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka.

[21] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Basic Population Information on Trincomalee District—2007: Preliminary Report: Based on Special Enumeration—2007," October 2007, 14, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/Preliminary%20Reports%20Special%20Enumeration%202007/Basic%20Population%20Information%20on%20Trincomalee%20District%202007.pdf

[22] No government figures since 1981 census.

Sri Lankan Army rapidly drove the LTTE out of the area.[23] The Sri Lankan government has taken concrete steps toward reconstructing and resettling the city.[24]

Important Elements of History

Ancient

Although they were not the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka, the Tamils were among the early immigrants to the island. Successive waves of invasions from the South Indian kingdoms and peaceful immigration increased the number of Tamil settlers in Sri Lanka, especially in the northern part of the island.

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Ruins at Anuradhapura

In the second century B.C.E., two Tamil horse traders, Sena and Guttika, led a force of Tamil adventurers to Sri Lanka and defeated the Sinhalese king, Sūratissa. They ruled the island from Anuradhapura for 22 years from 237 B.C.E.–215 B.C.E.[25]

The second invasion that dramatically changed the island was that of Elara (101 B.C.E–77 B.C.E.), who came from Chola (in present-day India's Tamil Nadu) to seize the Sinhalese kingdom by defeating King Asela. Elara ruled Sri Lanka for 44 years. According to the 5th century C.E. Pali epic the *Mahavaṃsa,* he ruled with even-handed justice.[26] He even ordered the execution of his son because of a heinous religious crime committed against the Buddhists.[27]

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[23] Sutirtho Patranobis, "Abandoned Town, Office Stripped Bare," *Hindustan Times Online,* 5 January 2009, http://www.hindustantimes.com/Abandoned-town-office-stripped-bare/Article1-363328.aspx
[24] Asian Development Bank, "Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka: Jaffna and Kilinochchi Water Supply and Sanitation Project," 2010, http://www.adb.org/Documents/Resettlement_Plans/SRI/37378/37378-01-sri-rp-draft-01.pdf
[25] Asoka Bandarage, "Ethno-Religious Evolution in Pre-Colonial Sri Lanka," *Journal of the International Center for Ethnic Studies* 21, no. 2 (July 2003): 111.
[26] Chelvadurai Manogaran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 24.
[27] Ananda Wickremaeratne, *Buddhism and Ethnicity in Sri Lanka: A Historical Analysis* (New Delhi: Vikras Publishing House, 1995), 129–130.

Medieval

In 1214 C.E., another Tamil adventurer, Kalinga Magha, led an invasion of Sri Lanka from the east coast of India and ruled over the Polonnaruwa Kingdom from 1215 to 1236. During his reign, the Sinhalese faced forcible assimilation into the Dravidian kingdoms of India. Eventually, the Sinhalese king Vijayabahu III, who had established a separate kingdom in Dambadeniya, defeated Magha. Despite this defeat, many of Magha's forces, who were primarily South Indian mercenaries, remained in Sri Lanka and intermarried with the Sinhalese.[28]

Not only did Magha's invasion create a strong Tamil presence in the north and east, but his religious attacks on Buddhists and Vaishnavite Hindus assured Shaivite domination of the latter faith and fused some beliefs with the former. Vaishnavites are Hindus who hold Vishnu to be the preeminent deity of the Hindu pantheon, and Shaivites instead hold Shiva to be paramount.

In 1247 and 1270, the Southeast Asian kingdom of Tambralinga invaded Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese forces defeated the invaders with the assistance of the Pandyan Kingdom, a predominantly Tamil kingdom of South India. But the Sinhalese kingdom was so weakened that their Pandyan allies created a Tamil kingdom in the north of Sri Lanka with its base in Jaffna. Over the subsequent few centuries, this was essentially a vassal state with shifting alliances to the Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms. By 1467, the Jaffna Kingdom proclaimed its independence.[29, 30]

Public domain
Ministers quarters

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[28] Dennis B. McGilvray, *Crucible of Conflict: Tamil and Muslim Society on the East Coast of Sri Lanka* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 58–61.

[29] W.M. Sirisena, *Sri Lanka and South-East Asia: Political, Religious and Cultural Relations from A.D. c. 1000 to c. 1500* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 38–57.

[30] R. Vasundhara Mohan, *Identity Crisis of Sri Lankan Muslims* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1987), 121.

Colonial

In 1505, the first Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka. Within little more than a decade, a sizable fleet of Portuguese ships landed at Colombo and the Portuguese began construction of a fort. Although initially focused on the kingdoms of the Sinhalese, by 1560 the Portuguese began their conquest of the Jaffna Kingdom. In 1619, the Portuguese completed their conquest, annexing the territory to their southern holdings.[31] With colonial rule, many Tamils were converted to Roman Catholicism, which remains the second most common faith among Sri Lankan Tamils today.[32, 33, 34, 35]

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Ruins of Dutch Fort, Jaffna

In 1658, the Dutch replaced the Portuguese as the colonial power in Sri Lanka. Only the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy remained independent. The Dutch brought many South Indian laborers and mercenaries to Sri Lanka, some of whom married into Tamil and Sinhalese families. Others mixed with Muslims on the island.[36] The Dutch introduced Calvinism to Sri Lanka, and many of the Catholic Tamils regularly attended the state church; however, following the British victory over the Dutch in Sri Lanka at the close of the 18th century, the vast majority of these Christians returned to Catholicism.[37]

On 16 February 1796, the last of the Dutch forces in Sri Lanka were defeated by a joint Anglo–Kandyan army.[38] Although the Kandyans had expected to extend their power as the last independent indigenous kingdom, they were betrayed, and by 1815 the entire island succumbed to British authority.

For the Tamils this was a boon. Under the British system, which intentionally pitted ethnic groups against one another, the Tamils were a privileged group. They received preference in education and in hiring for the civil service. By the late 1940s, the closing years of British colonialism in Sri Lanka, Tamils accounted for 33% of the civil service and 40% of the judiciary,

[31] Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 200.

[32] Jeyaraj Rasiah, "Chapter 3: Sri Lanka," in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 45–60.

[33] P.K. Balachandran, "LTTE-Lanka Battle for Catholic Support," *Hindustan Times*, 15 April 2007, http://www.hindustantimes.com/LTTE-Lanka-battle-for-Catholic-support/Article1-216085.aspx

[34] Øivind Fuglerud, "Chapter 4: Aesthetics of Martyrdom: The Celebration of Violent Death among the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," in *Violence Expressed: An Anthropological Approach*, eds. Maria Six-Hohenbalken and Nerina Weiss (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 72 fn3.

[35] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Brief Analysis of Population and Housing Characteristics," c. 2001, 11, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/PDF/p7%20population%20and%20Housing%20Text-11-12-06.pdf

[36] Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 24, no. 2 (2003): 131–177.

[37] Klaus Koschorke, "Dutch Colonial Church and Catholic Underground Church in Ceylon in the 17th and 18th Centuries," in *"Christen und Gewürze": Konfrontation und Interaktion kolonialer und indigener Christenumsvarianten*, ed. Klaus Koschorke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 95–106.

[38] Elizabeth J. Harris, *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, Missionary and Colonial Experience in Nineteenth-Century Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 11.

although they were less than 10% of the island's population.[39] Exacerbating the situation, the British imported Tamil laborers from India to work on British plantations, creating a new underprivileged class, known as Estate Tamils,that undermined the indigenous farmers of Sri Lanka.[40]

Independence to Civil War

On 4 February 1948, the United Kingdom granted Sri Lanka independence. As they had in India, the British colonialists left in their wake a situation primed for violence and upheaval.[41] In Sri Lanka, they had sown the seeds of calamity in a different manner, but the results were extraordinarily similar.

Following independence, the United National Party government acted to withhold citizenship and suffrage from the Estate Tamils. Even though the leftist opposition and other Sinhala lawmakers were cautious of the measures, the Tamil Congress leadership was persuaded to support the legislation. The majority of Sinhalese and many Sri Lankan Tamils did not view the Indian Tamils as rightful citizens of an independent Sri Lanka.[42, 43]

In 1956, Sri Lankans voted the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and their leftist allies to power. The new government passed numerous nationalist and socialist reforms that staunchly supported Sinhalese and Buddhist cultural dominance. Among the most controversial was the 1958 Official Language Act that made Sinhala the official language of the country. The law sparked pervasive opposition in the Tamil community, who began a struggle to secure equal status for the Tamil language. At the same time, Tamil secessionist organizations emerged.[44]

In 1972, the government ratified a new constitution changing the form of governance to a republic. But the Tamils complained that the change did little to address their concerns and worried that it elevated Buddhism to the status of the official state religion.[45]

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Tamil secessionist movements gathered steam, and chief among them were the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In August 1983, amid an increase in communal violence, Sinhalese rioters killed a number of Tamils and destroyed Tamil properties in response to LTTE attacks. More than 100,000 Tamils fled as refugees to the

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[39] Neil DeVotta, "From Ethnic Outbidding to Ethnic Conflict: The Institutional Bases for Sri Lanka's Separatist War," *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 1 (January 2005), 141–159.

[40] Erin K. Jenne, "Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State," in *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation, 2003), 225.

[41] Gautam Ghosh, "Outsiders at Home? The South Asian Diaspora in South Asia," in *Everyday Life in South Asia*, eds. Diane P. Mines and Sarah Lamb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 227.

[42] Valli Kanapathipillai, *Citizenship and Statelessness in Sri Lanka: The Case of the Tamil Estate Workers* (London: Anthem Press, 2009), 52.

[43] A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Electoral Politics in an Emergent State: The Ceylon General Election of May 1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

[44] Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 50–52.

[45] A.M. Navaratna-Bandara, "Ethnic Relations and State Crafting in Post-Independence Sri Lanka," in *Sri Lanka: Current Issues and Historical Background,* ed. Walter Nubin (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 66–67.

neighboring Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The LTTE launched a guerrilla war, violently attacking Sinhalese and Muslim civilians as well as military targets and moderate Tamil politicians.[46]

Civil War (1983–2009)

For 26 years, Sri Lanka was devastated by a bitter ethnic civil war. From 1987 to 1990, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi intervened in the conflict, sending several thousand Indian troops under the auspices of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to disarm the LTTE. It was a complete debacle.[47] Shortly following the withdrawal of Indian troops in 1990, an LTTE assassin killed Gandhi. In 1993, another LTTE operative assassinated Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa.[48,49]

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Victory monument

It is important to note that the vast majority of Tamils did not support the LTTE. Indeed, the lack of enthusiasm for the movement led the LTTE to resort to forcible recruitment, including abducting schoolchildren to serve as fighters. The organization also used intimidation and blackmail to extract financial support from the Tamil diaspora in the West.[50]

In 2004, the commander of LTTE forces in eastern Sri Lanka, Colonel Karuna, split with the group's leadership and opened a dialog with the government. This essentially removed eastern Sri Lanka from the combat theater and significantly reduced the LTTE's resources.[51]

After repeated attempts to reach an enduring peace with the LTTE proved futile, the Sri Lankan government launched a massive campaign in 2006. By the middle of May 2009, the Sri Lankan Army had regained control of all rebel-held territory, and the se nior leadership of the LTTE, including its founding figure, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was killed or captured. At the end of the civil war, the estimated death toll from the conflict stood at 80,000–100,000.[52]

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[46] Neil DeVotta, *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 166–190.

[47] John M. Richardson, *Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism, and Development from Sri Lanka's Civil Wars* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005), 533–534.

[48] Chris Smith, "South Asia's Enduring War," in *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 17–40.

[49] Donald R. Snodgrass, "The Economic Development of Sri Lanka: A Tale of Missed Opportunities," in *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 89–108.

[50] K. Alan Kronstadt, "Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations," *Politics and Economics of Asia* 10 (2004): 133–144.

[51] Andrew Hosken, "'I Realised We Would Never Win,'" *BBC Radio*, 5 May 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8033000/8033150.stm

[52] Bharatha Mallawarachi, "Sri Lanka's President Stats by His Armed Forces," *Associated Press*, 26 May 2011, http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hfGMMzwTLz6RJOYiwvvlu3FqtmIA?docId=9f0cda1a3b0 54d9ca9a01dff0d50c0ac

Recent Events

Since the conclusion of the war, the government of Sri Lanka has faced the daunting task of rebuilding the north and east of the country, which are the areas with the highest percentage of Tamils. The government of Sri Lanka has relied heavily upon foreign aid to finance reconstruction projects.

In a televised speech to the nation shortly after the conclusion of the civil war, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa reached out to the Tamil minority, delivering his address in both Sinhala and Tamil.[53]

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Patriotic display

Yet recovery efforts have been hampered by the worldwide recession and the reservations expressed by some governments and nongovernment organizations over the sincerity of Rajapaksa's commitment to addressing the concerns of the Tamil minority. Additionally, the United Nations recently released a report alleging the Sri Lankan government was culpable for human rights violations in the closing phases of the war, suggesting that key members of the government might stand trial for such crimes.[54] The Sri Lankan government has strongly denied such accusations, which have dampened its cooperation with international agencies.[55]

In a May 2011 visit to Sri Lanka, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O. Blake, Jr., who previously served as the U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka, praised the Sri Lankan government for its prompt resettlement of nearly all the internally displaced persons (IDP) who were previously held in government camps following the end of the civil war.[56]

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[53] "No Mention of Prabhakaran in Rajapaksa's Victory Speech," *Times of India*, 19 May 2009, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-05-19/south-asia/28203310_1_rajapaksa-tamil-tigers-tamil-eelam
[54] Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka* (Geneva: United Nations, 2011), http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/POE_Report_Full.pdf
[55] Ranga Sirilal, "Sri Lanka Says U.N. War Crimes Report Threatens Peace Efforts," Reuters, 27 April 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/27/columns-us-srilanka-un-idUSTRE73Q3JD20110427
[56] Robert O. Blake, Jr., "U.S.–Sri Lanka Relations," (press conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 4 May 2011), http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2011/162574.htm

Government

The government of Sri Lanka is a republic. Although it was a unitary state in the years immediately following its independence from the United Kingdom, growing dissatisfaction with central governance led to legislation decentralizing the administration. As a result, the central government established provincial councils under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act, both of 1987.[57] Today, the island is divided into 9 provinces, which are further divided into a total of 25 districts. Of these, the Tamils make up the majority in only the Northern Province and in the Batticaloa district within the Eastern Province.[58]

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Supreme Court building

Each Provincial Council has a governor, who is appointed to a 5-year term and answers directly to the president of Sri Lanka. Each council includes a chief minister, who is appointed by the governor from among the members of the Provincial Council. The chief minister serves as a liaison between the provincial executive and legislative bodies. A Board of Ministers serves as a cabinet for the chief minister. These positions are appointed from among the members of the Provincial Council with the advice of the chief minister and approval from the central government.[59]

The provinces are further divided into districts, which are in turn separated into divisions. These smaller units function in a manner similar to counties and townships in the United States.

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[57] Government of Sri Lanka, "Provisional Councils," 3 September 2010,
http://www.priu.gov.lk/ProvCouncils/ProvicialCouncils.html
[58] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Population by Ethnic Group and District, Census 1981, 2001," n.d., http://www.statistics.gov.lk/abstract2010/chapters/Chap2/AB2-11.pdf
[59] Government of Sri Lanka, "Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution," 14 November 1987,
http://www.lawnet.lk/process.php?st=1987Y0V0C0A13S&hword=%27%27&path=6

Media

The media in Sri Lanka is divided largely by language and political affiliations. The government operates two television channels and a radio network, which tend to trumpet the policies and public relations of whichever party is in control. Consumers are able to subscribe to multichannel satellite and cable TV services. There are eight private TV stations and numerous private radio stations. The print media, with a staggering array of outlets, offers a broad range of perspectives on issues. All political parties have dedicated outlets that cater to the tastes of loyal party members. [60]

© Internews Network / flickr.com
An interview in Matale

The Sri Lankan government has a mixed record on media freedom. In addition to using state-run media to promulgate propaganda, the government has been accused by international observers of intimidating reporters. The government has been implicated in several high-profile cases involving the beatings, deaths, or disappearances of media personalities. [61, 62] Furthermore, the government banned all media coverage of war operations throughout much of the 26-year civil conflict. But in mid-2010, the government released jailed journalist Jayaprakash Tissainayagam, who had been sentenced in 2009 for ties to the LTTE. International observers are hopeful that this may auger a more liberal policy toward media freedom in the postwar era. [63]

During the civil war, the LTTE strictly censored the media within its area of control. Journalists who dared to disagree with the LTTE were frequently beaten, tortured, or killed. [64] The LTTE was extremely savvy in their use of the news media aimed at the diaspora and international communities. Through a plethora of websites, online videos, and other outlets, the LTTE pleaded its plight and painted itself as a noble band of freedom fighters beset by a repressive, fascist regime bent on annihilating the Tamil people. [65, 66]

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[60] Central Intelligence Agency, "Sri Lanka: Communications," in *The World Factbook*, 22 June 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html

[61] Oliver Luft, "Fears for Press Freedom in Sri Lanka," *Guardian Online (UK)*, 24 June 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/jun/24/press-freedom-sri-lanka

[62] Amantha Perera, "Sri Lanka: Media Freedom Still Distant," *Inter Press Service*, 11 January 2011, http://www.globalissues.org/news/2011/01/11/8135

[63] Adithya Alles, "Sri Lanka's Media-Friendly Turnaround," *Asia Times Online*, 13 May 2010, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LE13Df02.html

[64] Freedom House, "Freedom in the World–Sri Lanka (2006)," 19 December 2005, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/473c559442.html

[65] Janaka Perera, "LTTE a Trend Setter in Cyber Terrorism," *Asian Tribune*, 29 October 2007, http://www.asiantribune.com/node/8018

[66] Apratim Mukarji, *Sri Lanka: A Dangerous Interlude* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2005), 78–79.

Economy

Politicians have used the Sri Lankan economy as an ideological tool to bludgeon the opposition, and a means to reap the rewards of elected office. Thus, the economic system has vacillated between a statist command economy and free market capitalism, depending upon the fortunes of the two major political parties.[67] The onset of communal violence in 1983 stymied the economy and created a sense of economic insecurity.

© Gerald Pereira / flickr.com
Road construction

The 2002 ceasefire agreement created a moment of calm that allowed the government to get the economy back on its feet. The 2004 tsunami derailed much of that progress; however, with the infusion of foreign aid in the wake of the tragedy, the economy soon recovered.[68, 69] The war resumed shortly thereafter, but the successful completion of the conflict and subsequent foreign aid for reconstruction of the north created strong economic growth.[70]

With an economy of USD 24.1 billion (2010 est.), and a per capita GDP of approximately USD 2,400, Sri Lanka has seen strong growth rates in recent years.[71] Hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans work abroad (approximately 90% work in the Middle East) and send home about USD 3 billion annually.[72]

In 2010, the country's strongest economic sector was the service sector, accounting for 59% of the economy, followed by 29% for industry and 12% for agriculture. Each sector posted significant growth the same year, with an 8% jump in the service sector, 8.4% in industry, and 7% in agriculture.[73]

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[67] John Richardson, *Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism, and Development from Sri Lanka's Civil Wars* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005), 189–216.

[68] Asian Development Bank, "Sri Lanka Needs US$1.5 Billion for Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction," news release, 02 February 2005, http://www.adb.org/media/articles/2005/6832_Sri_Lanka_needs/Tsunami_Damage_and_Needs_Assessment.pdf

[69] United States Agency for International Development, "Audit of USAID/Sri Lanka's Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction Program Selected Outputs" (audit report, Manila, Phillipines, 2007), http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=2&sqi=2&ved=0CCAQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.usaid.gov%2Foig%2Fpublic%2Ffy07rpts%2F5-383-07-007-p.pdf&rct=j&q=lanka%20tsunami%20recovery%20economics&ei=jfroTfbHNI2asAPQ1uj_DQ&usg=AFQjCNGMWve-9uvuDqg3xCHt6Cnz7PCZ7A&sig2=JAM_uisnmcwPdBSaCuIrVw&cad=rja

[70] "Sri Lanka's Post-war Recovery: Rebuilding, but at a Cost," *The Economist*, 19 August 2010, http://www.economist.com/node/16847146

[71] Department of Census and Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Government of Sri Lanka, "Press Note on Annual Estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," 2010, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/national_accounts/Press%20Release/PRESS%20NOTE%20%202010%20Annual.pdf

[72] "Foreign Remittances, Lifeline of Economy—Dr. Amunugama," *Sunday Observer (Lanka)*, 30 January 2011, http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2011/01/30/new33.asp

[73] Department of Census and Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Government of Sri Lanka, "Press Note on Annual Estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," 2010, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/national_accounts/Press%20Release/PRESS%20NOTE%20%202010%20Annual.pdf

Economy in Tamil Areas

Those living in territories controlled from 1983 to 2009 by the LTTE and other Tamil militant groups suffered severe economic hardships. Many traditional occupations such as fishing and farming proved untenable in a war zone. Many Tamils had to rely upon the remittances of family living abroad and welfare payments from the LTTE to eke out a living.[74]

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IDP camp, Vavuniya

The LTTE maintained a steady stream of revenue through various nefarious activities. The organization extorted monies from the diaspora communities in Europe, North America, and Oceania. They operated weapons smuggling operations for other terrorist organizations and engaged in drug trafficking. Additionally, LTTE cadres provided other terrorist networks with training, such as the use of suicide bombers.[75]

Since the conclusion of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009, billions of US dollars in foreign aid have provided for the reconstruction of the Tamil areas in the north and east. For example, the Re-awakening Project aims at building an irrigation infrastructure and rehabilitating rural areas for agricultural endeavors that will improve the lives of rural families in war-affected areas.[76, 77] The Dry Zone Urban Water and Sanitation Project, funded by the Asian Development Bank, aims to provide safe drinking water as well as wastewater and septage management to northern areas ravaged by the war.[78]

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[74] Deborah Winslow and Michael D. Woost, eds., "Articulations of Economy and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka," in *Economy, Culture, and Civil War in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 1 – 27.

[75] Thomas J. Biersteker and Sue E. Eckert, eds., *Countering the Financing of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 138 – 140.

[76] World Bank, "World Bank Provides Support for Thousands of Victims Affected by Recent Floods in Sri Lanka" (press release), 02 June 2011, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:22930657~pagePK:64257043~piPK:4373 76~theSitePK:4607,00.html?cid=3001_7

[77] International Development Association, World Bank, "Restoring Livelihoods in Conflict Zones," 2009, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/IDA/0,,contentMDK:21345456~menuPK:47540 51~pagePK:51236175~piPK:437394~theSitePK:73154,00.html

[78] Asian Development Bank, "Dry Zone Urban Water and Sanitation Project: Sri Lanka," 2008, http://pid.adb.org/pid/LoanView.htm?projNo=37381&seqNo=02&typeCd=2&projType=GRNT

Ethnic groups

Tamils

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Tamil bloggers, Colombo

The Tamils, a minority group in Sri Lanka, are a Dravidian people with their origins in the Indian subcontinent. More than 70 million Tamils live in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, across the narrow Palk Strait from Sri Lanka.[79] Tamil is a Southern Dravidian language, closely related to Kannada and Malayalam.[80] The vast majority of Sri Lankan Tamils are Hindu, but a sizeable and influential minority are Roman Catholic.

According to the 2001 provisional census, which was conducted in only 18 of the 25 districts because the civil war was ongoing, the various Tamil peoples make up roughly 8.5% of the population of Sri Lanka.[81] But in the northern and eastern districts, which were heavily affected by the extended civil war, Tamils have historically composed between 18% and 95% of the population. It is important to note that these latter figures are derived from the 1981 census, which was based on prewar populations.[82] As a result, the figures are uncertain, especially given the significant demographic changes caused by the war. The government is in the process of conducting its 2011 census, and new figures are expected to paint a clearer picture of the demographics.[83]

Sinhalese

The Sinhalese, the majority group in Sri Lanka that largely composes the government, are an Aryan people who trace their lineage and culture to North India. As such, they are an isolated community among the Dravidians of South India, and many scholars have ascribed to them a sense of feeling outnumbered in their country. This was undoubtedly exacerbated by the British colonial administration that from 1796 to 1948 treated the Tamil population of Sri Lanka as a privileged class, to the detriment of the Sinhalese.[84]

Though the Sinhalese make up a majority of the population of Sri Lanka, they are not a significant ethnic group in the northern and eastern districts. They speak Sinhala, an Indo–Aryan

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[79] Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "Provisional Population Totals—Census 2011: Tamil Nadu: Provisional Population Totals at a Glance," 2011, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/tamilnadu/2-FIGURES%20AT%20A%20GLANCE-tn.pdf

[80] M. Paul Lewis, ed., "Tamil," in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=tam

[81] Central Intelligence Agency, "Sri Lanka: People," in *The World Factbook*, 26 May 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html

[82] International Centre for Ethnic Studies, "Principle Ethnic Groups: Sri Lanka," n.d., http://www.ices.lk/sl_database/ethnic_groups.shtml

[83] "Sri Lanka Census after 30 Years to Form Official Data," *South Asian Focus*, 18 May 2011, http://www.southasianfocus.ca/international/article/98287

[84] A.R.M. Imtiyaz, "The Politicization of Buddhism and Electoral Politics in Sri Lanka," in *Religion and Politics in South Asia*, ed. Ali Riaz (New York: Routledge, 2010), 155.

language related most closely to Dhivehi, the language of Maldives, and Mahl, the language of the Indian island of Minicoy.[85]

Moors

The Moors of Sri Lanka are the ethnic Muslims of the island. They are descended from Arab traders, Indian migrant laborers, mercenaries, and other Muslims who found their way to the island and stayed.[86] The most recent figures show that the Moors make up 7.2% of the population. That figure will likely increase with the completion of the 2011 census, because many of the areas inhabited by the Moors were in the hands of the LTTE during the last census. Most Moors speak Tamil as their first language.[87] They are concentrated along the eastern seaboard of the country; however, many live in the country's major cities.

© Markus Spring / flickr.com
Muslim children, Kalmunai

Caught in the crossfire of the civil war, the Moors suffered many depredations at the hands of the LTTE, which systematically decimated rebel-held territory.[88] The Sri Lankan government is taking special measures to resettle Moors who were dislocated by the conflict.[89]

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[85] Central Intelligence Agency, "Sri Lanka: People," in *The World Factbook*, 26 May 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html

[86] Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 7–8.

[87] Anton Piyarathane, "Human and Minority Rights in Sri Lanka," in *Minority Rights in South Asia*, eds. Rainer Hofmann and Ugo Caruso (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 55–56.

[88] Michael D. Woost and Deborah Winslow, "Epilogue, or Prelude to Peace?" in *Economy, Culture, and Civil War in Sri Lanka*, eds. Deborah Winslow and Michael D. Winslow (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 196–197.

[89] Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), "Sri Lanka: Difficult Homecoming for Muslim IDPs," 22 March 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4bb06c8414.html

Burghers

Descended in part from European colonialists, the Burghers are small in number; however, they are an important element of Sri Lankan culture. Although some families are descended from Dutch and English ancestors, most are of Portuguese descent, and this Portuguese heritage is maintained by the Burgher community.[90] During the years immediately following independence, when the government opted for Sinhala or Tamil curriculum in the schools rather than English, many Burghers immigrated, largely to Australia, Canada, and the United States.[91, 92] Historically the Burghers were nearly exclusively Christian, but some have converted to Buddhism because of the emergence of Sinhala nationalism. Most Burghers live in the major cities of Sri Lanka, including those in the east of the country with predominantly Tamil or Moor populations.[93]

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[90] Dennis B. McGilvray, "The Portuguese Burghers of Eastern Sri Lanka in the Wake of Civil War and Tsunami," in *Re-Exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*, ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 325.

[91] Nanda P. Wanasundera, *Sri Lanka* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2002), 66.

[92] Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, "Buddhist Burghers and Sinhala-Buddhist Fundamentalism," in *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, eds. Tessa J. Bartholomeusz and Chandra R. de Silva (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 167–185.

[93] Dennis B. McGilvray, "The Portuguese Burghers of Eastern Sri Lanka in the Wake of Civil War and Tsunami," in *Re-Exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*, ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 337.

Chapter 1 Assessment

1. The Jaffna Peninsula has the highest percentage of Tamils in the country.
   TRUE
   The Jaffna Peninsula is the northernmost region of the island. It is low-lying, flat, and watered primarily by underground aquifers. The region also has the highest percentage of Tamils in the country.

2. Tamils make up a large segment of the population in all of Sri Lanka's main cities.
   FALSE
   Batticaloa is the only principal city of Sri Lanka in which the Tamils represent a significant segment of the population.

3. The Tamils are relatively new to Sri Lanka, arriving only during the British colonial period as indentured servants imported from India.
   FALSE
   Although some Tamils did arrive in this fashion, others have called Sri Lanka home since antiquity. Through the millennia, successive waves of immigration and conquest have witnessed the arrival of more and more Tamils from India.

4. Since Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948, the island has witnessed an historic period of peace and harmony among its ethnic groups.
   FALSE
   The Tamils and the Sinhalese have long harbored ill feelings toward one another, and this tension was utilized by the British during the colonial period. In the aftermath of independence, a resurgent wave of Sinhalese nationalism led to a rupture that culminated in the 26-year civil war from 1983–2009.

5. Since the end of the civil war, the government has given a great deal of attention to the reconstruction of the north and the revitalization of the economy in Tamil communities.
   TRUE
   Since the demise of the LTTE, billions in foreign aid have provided for the reconstruction of the Tamil areas in the north and east. For example, the Re-awakening Project aims at building anirrigation infrastructure and rehabilitating rural areas for agricultural endeavors in war-affected areas.

Chapter 2 Religion

Introduction

Although the island of Sri Lanka is far better known for its Buddhist heritage, the Tamils adhere primarily to Hinduism or Roman Catholicism. The former has its roots in antiquity and in the successive waves of immigration and invasion from India. The latter arrived more recently on the island during the period of Portuguese colonialism. Islam is also prevalent on the island, albeit not among the Tamils, who are a minority group in Sri Lanka. There is a high degree of syncretism among these faiths in Sri Lanka; this has helped the

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Koneshwara Kovil

various peoples there to live in relative religious harmony. For example, it is quite common to find a shrine with a Hindu deity, a Buddhist priest, and worshippers that include Muslims and Christians.

Overview of Major Religions

Hinduism

The core of Hinduism is in the Vedas, ancient texts describing the beliefs and practices of the Vedic civilization, which developed in northwestern India during the second millennium B.C.E.[94] The Upanishads serve as a continuation of the Vedas and focus on religious knowledge. The great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, expound upon issues of duty, destiny, and virtue.[95]

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Vel festival, Colombo

Hindus believe in the reincarnation (*samsara*) of the soul (*atman*) and that the quality of a person's next life is determined by one's actions in previous ones (*karma*). The caste system, in which people are born into different social strata, is tied to this concept. To improve their position, Hindus must remain spiritually devout and follow the social and moral guidelines according to their station in life (*dharma*).[96] One can only overcome the cycle of rebirth through eradication of desire and ignorance. Achieved through monastic or devotional paths, this liberation from rebirth (*moksha*) is, in some conceptions, a union or reunion with Brahman, the eternal and infinite force from which everything else derives.[97]

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[94] R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 36–38.
[95] Bud Heckman, et al., *InterActive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community-Building Handbook* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2008), 168–169.
[96] R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 102–124.
[97] Murray Milner, *Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relations and an Analysis of Indian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 42–45.

The pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses—hundreds of millions in Hindu scripture—are all expressions of Brahman, so worshippers may venerate any of these deities.[98] The major sects of Hinduism are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism, which take, respectively, Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti (the goddess) as their primary deities.[99] Hindus often worship these and other deities according to caste, locality, or personal choice.

The most recent census data indicates Tamils make up roughly 8.5% of the Sri Lankan population, or about 1.9 million out of a total population of 21.2 million.[100] An estimated 80% to 90% of Tamils are Hindu.[101]

The main form of Hinduism practiced among the Tamils is Shaivism. In fact, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and others flock to the pilgrimage site of Kataragama, which is dedicated to one of the sons of Shiva, Kataragama (also known as Murugan or Skanda).[102] Even the indigenous Veddahs hold this deity and the site as sacred because legend holds that the god married a goddess of the Veddahs' traditional faith.[103]

Roman Catholicism

Those Tamils who do not subscribe to Hinduism are primarily Roman Catholic Christians. This stems from the impact of Portuguese colonialism from 1505 to 1656.[104]

The Roman Catholic Church traces its roots to Jesus Christ and his Apostles. With the passing of millennia, a complex hierarchy emerged with the Pope at its pinnacle. During the same time, Catholic theologians developed an elaborate theology.[105, 106]

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Madhu Church, Palampiddi

 The first Catholic missionaries arrived in Sri Lanka from Portugal in 1546. In addition to caring for the Portuguese garrison, they ministered to the local population. But it was the conversion of Dharmapala, heir to the Kotte Kingdom, that served as a watershed event. An estimated 3,000 Sri Lankans followed suit and embraced the faith. The Tamils were more resistant. The king of Jaffna sent troops to slaughter several thousand Tamil converts on Mannar Island. In response,

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[98] David Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 34.

[99] Sudhir Kakar, *Mad and Divine: Spirit and Psyche in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 142–150.

[100] Central Intelligence Agency, "Sri Lanka," in *The World Factbook*, 8 March 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html

[101] Walter Nubin, *Sri Lanka: Current Issues and Historical Background* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 146.

[102] Bryan Pfaffenberger, "The Kataragama Pilgrimage: Hindu-Buddhist Interaction and Its Significance in Sri Lanka's Polyethnic Social System," *Journal of Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (February 1979): 253–270.

[103] Margaret A. Mills, Peter J. Claus, and Sarah Diamond, eds., *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 330–331.

[104] Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 41–43.

[105] Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 430–449.

[106] Michael J. Walsh, *Roman Catholicism: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 91–111.

the Portuguese fortified the island and used it as a base to conquer the Kingdom of Jaffna. It was among those Tamil converts on Mannar Island that the Catholic faith took the strongest roots in Sri Lanka, with an estimated 100,000 or more converts by the end of the Portuguese presence in 1658.[107]

Although a small minority, these Christian Tamils have played a significant role in Sri Lankan history. The late leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was Catholic, which repudiates the misplaced notion among many international journalists, scholars, and policymakers that the terrorist group was a Hindu organization. Catholic clergy were among the more vocal supporters of the organization.[108]

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning that its followers believe in a single deity. The Muslim community, or *umma*, calls this deity Allah. The Arabic term *islam* means "to submit" or "to surrender." So a Muslim is one who submits to the will of Allah.[109] Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad as the

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Sri Lanka Mosque

last in a long line of prophets including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Allah's message, as relayed by Muhammad, is delivered in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Additional sacred guidlines include the hadith, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the sunna, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad's example.

The essential beliefs and rites of the Muslim faith are encapsulated in the Five Pillars of Islam. The first and central pillar is the faithful recitation of the *shahada*, or Islamic creed: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." The remaining pillars include performing ritual prayers five times per day; giving alms to the poor and needy; fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and undertaking a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca.[110] Muslims believe that Allah will judge them for their actions on earth.[111]

Islam has two main branches, Sunni and Shi'a, that fractured primarily over the succession of authority after Muhammad's death.[112]

Although there are few Tamil Muslims, the Moors of Sri Lanka adhere to the faith and frequently live in areas heavily populated with Tamils. Furthermore, many Moors speak Tamil.

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[107] Jeyaraj Rasiah, "Sri Lanka," in *Christianities in Asia*, Peter C. Phan, ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 46–47.

[108] Asoka Badarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 67.

[109] Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 177.

[110] Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1994), 118–136.

[111] Michael Anthony Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2005), 35–40.

[112] Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Formation of Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 83–90.

During the civil war, the LTTE frequently targeted Muslim communities, driving the Moors to the safety of government-held territory and the east coast, where Muslims are the plurality.[113]

© R Barraez D´Lucca / flickr.com
Ruwanveli Saya Stupa

Buddhism

Although few Tamils are Buddhists, 69% of the Sri Lankan population, especially the Sinhalese, who primarily make up the government, follow this faith.[114]

Siddhartha Gautama was born in the 6th century B.C.E. in India. According to tradition, he was a Hindu prince of the warrior caste who renounced his family life and luxuries to pursue a spiritual path. After many years, Siddhartha became aware of the cause of suffering. He also realized a way to overcome this state and dedicated his life to passing this knowledge to others. In doing so, he reached a state of existence known as enlightenment. Thereafter, he was referred to as the Buddha, "enlightened one." He articulated a religious-philosophical doctrine now known as Buddhism.[115]

The Buddha was interested in restoring morality to what he interpreted as the legalistic and highly ritualistic character of Hinduism. Thus, the tenets of Buddhism focused on humankind, rather than on deities. The central premise of Buddhism is that humans can escape life's pain only by ending their worldly attachments. The ultimate goal is enlightenment, known as *nibbana*. According to Buddhist scripture and belief, enlightenment is a state of mind that transcends desire and therefore ends suffering.[116]

The Buddha taught that people should avoid all extremes and attachment to passions in their lives and follow an ideal known as the Middle Way. This involves awareness of the Buddhist concept of the Four Noble Truths. According to the Buddha, desire is the cause of suffering and the Four Noble Truths outline a way to be free from it by following the Eightfold Path. This route, which requires no intervention of priests, consists of the following ethical-moral choices: "right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort." The remaining two moral choices, right mindfulness and right concentration, involve the quality of meditation necessary to gain higher awareness and sustain oneself on the Eightfold Path.[117]

[113] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Brief Analysis of Population and Housing Characteristics," n.d., 11, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/PDF/p7%20population%20and%20Housing%20Text-11-12-06.pdf

[114] Central Intelligence Agency, "Sri Lanka," in *The World Factbook*, 8 March 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html

[115] Richard Francis Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 32–60.

[116] Anil D. Goonewardene, "Buddhism," in *Six World Faiths*, ed. W. Owen Cole (New York: Continuum, 2004), 104–122.

[117] Herant A. Katchadourian, *Guilt: The Bite of Conscience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 239–241.
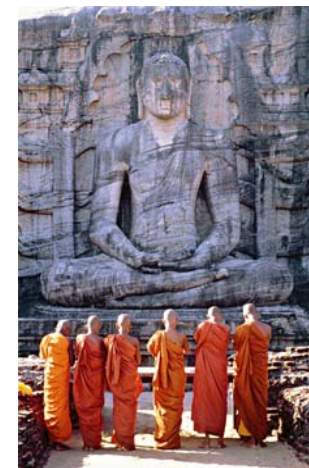
Like most religions, Buddhism is not a monolithic faith. There are many branches of Buddhism, but the one most prevalent in Sri Lanka is the conservative Theravāda Buddhism.[118]

Role of Religion in the Government

In 1972, the island known as Ceylon changed its name to Sri Lanka. At the same time, legislators designated Buddhism as the country's official religion; however, religious freedom is accorded to all faiths.[119]

Buddhist monks have long played a significant role in governance. In a symbiotic relationship with the state, the monks provide or withhold legitimacy to leaders in return for government support. Most recently, Buddhist monks have been staunch supporters of Sinhalese nationalism and the war against the Tamil separatists. In fact, they formed a political party to forward their agenda.[120]

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Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa

Catholic priests in Sri Lanka sided heavily with the LTTE during the civil war. Preaching liberation theology from their pulpits, they provided the terrorists with the aura of legitimacy among the Catholic Tamil community. They also served as unofficial propagandists for the LTTE, praising the group to the international media and providing exaggerated accounts of supposed government atrocities against the Tamil people. These actions served to undermine the government in Colombo.[121, 122]

Religion in Daily Life

For most Hindus, religion is interwoven into daily life, and distinctions between the sacred and the secular are less defined than in many Western cultures. Prayer and performing religious rituals are important parts of the daily life of most pious Hindus. Daily worship (*puja*) is performed in the morning after bathing but prior to eating or drinking anything. It is usually done in home shrines.[123]

© Jason Turgeon / flickr.com
Small Hindu shrine

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[118] Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 253–276.

[119] Edward P. Lipton, "Chapter 2: Religious Freedom in Sri Lanka," in *Sri Lanka: Current Issues and Historical Background*, ed. Walter Nubin (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 9–12.

[120] Mahinda Deegalle, "Politics of the Jathika Hela Urumaya: Buddhism and Ethnicity," in *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 331–588.

[121] Charles Haviland, "Sri Lanka Bishop Accuses Forces Over Missing Priests," BBC News, 3 November 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11686861

[122] Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 67.

[123] Axel Michaels, *Hinduism: Past and Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 241–245.

Religious Events and Holidays

There are numerous Hindu holidays, festivals, and observances. They are observed according to the Hindu lunar calendar, so their dates vary from year to year. Those celebrated in Sri Lanka include Thai Pongal, Maha Sivarathri, the Kataragama Festival, the Munneswaram Festival, the Vel Festival, and Deepavali.

© vikalpasl / flickr.com
Vel festival, Colombo

Thai Pongal is a harvest festival common in most Hindu communities around the world, held in mid-January. In Sri Lanka, Hindus decorate their homes with plantain and mango leaves, symbolizing a bountiful harvest. A special dish of sweetened rice (*pongal*) is prepared, and special reverence is offered to the solar deity.[124, 125]

The annual Vel Festival, named for the trident of the god Skanda (also known as Kataragama), is held in Colombo in the July–August timeframe. It commemorates Skanda's victory over the forces of evil. A massive gilded chariot with an image of the deity is carried through the streets of the capital. Thousands of devoted followers, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, gather along the route to offer reverence to Skanda by burning incense, breaking coconuts, and lighting firecrackers. A long procession composed of singers and musicians follows in the wake of the chariot.[126, 127]

Sri Lanka contains a number of Hindu pilgrimage sites, Kataragama foremost among them. A number of small shrines, the largest of which is dedicated to the god Skanda/Kataragama, comprise the Kataragama complex. The site is important to Buddhists and Muslims as well, and most of the shrines, though dedicated to an ostensibly Hindu deity, are in the care of Buddhist priests.[128]

© Brett Davies / flickr.com
Kataragama pilgrims

Another pilgrimage site is the Sita Eliya Temple near Nuwara Eliya in the central highlands. Reconstructed at the end of the 20th century at the site of an earlier Sita temple, it is reportedly the only Hindu temple in the world dedicated to the goddess Sita. Sita was the wife of Rama, the hero of the epic myth *Ramayana*. Many Sri Lankans believe that the *Ramayana* is historically accurate. Further, they believe that their

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[124] Bernard Trawicky, *Anniversaries & Holidays*, 5th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2000), 9.

[125] Royston Ellis, *Sri Lanka* (Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 61.

[126] C. Brooke Elliott, *Real Ceylon* (Colombo: H.W. Cave & Co., 1937), 132–133.

[127] Pradeep Jeganathan, "In the Shadow of Violence: 'Tamilness' and the Anthropology of Identity in Southern Sri Lanka," in *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, eds. Tessa J. Bartholomeusz and Chandra Richard De Silva (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 101–102.

[128] Richard Francis Gombrich and Gananath Obeyeskere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 164.

homeland was the site of the terrible battle described in that narrative, and that this temple is built on the spot where King Ravana, the antagonist, held Sita captive.[129]

Buildings of Worship

Hindu Temples

© Dennis S. Hurd / flickr.com
Trincomalee Kovil

The Hindu temple is known as a *mandir* or *kovil*. Within, one will find images of the primary and subordinate Hindu deities to whom the temple is dedicated. One will also find the priests, ritual specialists, and attendants who serve the temple. The temple is frequently used for communal worship and ritual performance, whereas daily prayers are typically done at small shrines in one's home.

Exchange 1: May I take photographs inside the temple?

Visitor:	May I take photographs inside the temple?	kovilukkul Naan fhoto yedukkalama?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam.

Christian Churches

There are a number of noteworthy churches in Sri Lanka. Foremost among these are the Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka and St. Anthony's National Shrine, both in Colombo.[130] In Tamil areas, one finds important churches in Jaffna, Mannar, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa.[131] Important Catholic pilgrimage sites include the St. Anne's Church in Thalawila, which is purported to date to the Portuguese colonial era, and the shrine at Our Lady at Madhu in the Mannar district.[132]

Behavior in Places of Worship

Hindu Temples

Those wishing to visit Hindu temples must first ask if the local temple may be visited by non-Hindus. Some temples do not allow non-Hindus, so one should always check before entering. Similarly, some temples may not permit women visitors. Visits, if permitted, take place during

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[129] Anupama Katakam, "Over a Temple for Sita," *Frontline* 17, no. 8 (India) (15–28 April 2000), http://www.lankalibrary.com/heritage/sita.htm

[130] Charles A. Gunawardena, *Encyclopedia of Sri Lanka* (Elgin, IL: New Dawn Press, 2005), 44.

[131] Katherine Smith Diehl, "Catholic Religious Orders in South Asia, 1500–1835," *Journal of Asia Studies* 37, no. 4 (August 1978): 699–711.

[132] R.L. Stirrat, *Power and Religiosity in a Post-Colonial Setting: Sinhala Catholics in Contemporary Sri Lanka* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 32.

periods when worship is not taking place. A small donation to the temple is not mandatory but is the courteous thing to do and much appreciated.[133]

Exchange 2: May I enter the temple?

Visitor:	May I enter the temple?	naan kovilukkal pogalama?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam.

Shoes should always be removed before entering a temple. Dress should be conservative. In some temples, men may be required to remove their shirt and wear a *sarong*. Once inside, keep your voice low, show respect, and do not touch the images.

Exchange 3: Where do my shoes go?

Guest:	Where do my shoes go?	yennudaiya kalanigalai yenge veipappadu?
Host:	Here on the rack.	inda chatta pallagaiil veikkalam.

Christian Churches

Statues and images of Christ are sacred to the Tamil people and should be approached quietly and with a respectful attitude. Inside a church, visitors should refrain from touching paintings or statues.

Exchange 4: Is this acceptable to wear?

Visitor:	Is this acceptable to wear?	idu annivadarku thakundada?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam

Visitors should dress modestly and avoid wearing skimpy, revealing, or dirty clothing. The dress code includes clean shirts and long pants for men, and skirts or long pants with blouses or sweaters for women. Women's clothing should be loose fitting, and skirts should not be shorter than knee length. Women may cover their hair with a scarf, but men must always remove their headwear.[134]

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[133] Gavin Thomas, *The Rough Guide to Sri Lanka* (London: Rough Guides, 2009), 56.

[134] Norine Dresser, *Multicultural Manners: Essential Rules of Etiquette for the 21st Century* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 57.

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Tamil-speaking Muslims were caught in the middle of the civil war and were driven from their homes by the Tamil LTTE.
   TRUE
   The LTTE targeted other groups in the territory under its control, driving Muslims out of the north and into refugee camps in government-controlled territory.

2. The main form of Buddhism practiced among the Tamils is Shaivism.
   FALSE
   Shaivism is a form of Hinduism widely practiced among the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The most prevalent form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is the conservative Theravāda Buddhism.

3. The separatist LTTE was a Hindu-dominated organization.
   FALSE
   The late leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was Catholic.

4. Special reverence is offered to the Hindu sun god during the Thai Pongal festival.
   TRUE
   During the Thai Pongal festival, which celebrates the harvest, a special dish of sweetened rice is prepared, and special reverence is offered to the solar deity of Hinduism.

5. The efforts of the Catholic Church during Sri Lanka's civil war helped stabilize the country.
   FALSE
   Actions of the Catholic Church during the civil war included providing international media with reports of alleged atrocities perpetuated by the state. The Church's actions helped to undermine the Sri Lankan government.

Chapter 3 Traditions

Introduction

Civil war severely altered Tamil traditions in Sri Lanka over the course of the last three decades. Pilgrimages were not safe. Villages were decimated by both sides. Tamils fought one another as well as the government and Indian peacekeeping forces. By the end of the war in 2009, an estimated 1 million Tamils had fled the country, seeking asylum abroad. That represents roughly one-quarter of the Tamil population in prewar Sri Lanka.[135] Approximately another quarter were internally displaced persons (IDPs) during the height of the war.[136]

© trokilinochchi / flickr.com
Kilinochchi IDPs

Additionally, tens of thousands of Tamils died in the conflict. Not surprisingly, many traditional ways of life were disrupted, and values and codes of honor were set aside in the interest of survival.

Honor and Values

Hindu religious values, such as a belief that the cause-and-effect chain of karma shapes destinies, unite the majority of Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Because 90% of the population adheres to Hinduism, they accept their place within the caste system. The caste into which they are born determines their aspirations and relationships throughout life. Though the caste system in Sri Lanka is much less rigid than that in India, it continues to exist,

© Internews Network / flickr.com
A joint family in Lanka

exerting conscious and unconscious influence over people. So deeply engrained is this tradition that it is often not publicly questioned.[137]

In urban settings, caste plays a role primarily in terms of marriage arrangements; otherwise, the various castes interact amiably in most other matters. But in rural areas, where most Tamils live, it remains a severe restraint on social mobility.[138]

Familial bonds are strong in the Tamil community. The elderly often live with their adult children, and the family reveres them. Extended families are common, although not as prevalent

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[135] International Crisis Group, "The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora after the LTTE" (report, Asia Report no. 186, 23 February 2010), 2, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/186%20The%20Sri%20Lankan%20Tamil%20Diaspora%20after%20the%20LTTE.ashx

[136] Nicola Jens, et al., "UNHCR's Programme for Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka" (evaluation report, United Kingdom Department for International Development and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, May 2002), v, http://www.chs.ubc.ca/srilanka/PDFs/UNHCR%20programme%20for%20IDPs%20in%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf

[137] Russell R. Ross and Andrea Matles Sevada, "Sri Lanka: A Country Study," in *Sri Lanka: Current Issues and Historical Background*, ed. Walter Nubin (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 153–155.

[138] Amali Philips, "Rethinking Culture and Development: Marriage and Gender among the Tea Plantation Workers of Sri Lanka," *Gender and Development* 11, no. 2 (July 2003): 20–29.

as they once were. Traditionally, Tamil families are patriarchal and the husband is the head of the household. Though many women work outside of the home today, they are still expected to perform the traditional work of a dutiful mother and wife.

Children are considered a blessing, and the many milestones of their lives are celebrated and frequently ritualized. Unlike some South Asian groups, Tamils show little preference for a particular gender, embracing the birth of a daughter as warmly as that of a son.[139]

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

The most common Tamil greeting is "Vanakkam," which is typically rendered with hands pressed together in the *namaskaram* gesture typically associated with South Asia.[140]

Exchange 5: Hi, Mr. Ramachandran! *(Informal)*

Visitor:	Hi, Mr. Ramachandran!	hai, thiru ramachandran
Local:	Hello!	allo.
Visitor:	Are you doing well?	nandraga irrukkireergala?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam.

Greetings are somewhat gender specific. When meeting for business, men typically give one another a light handshake after first offering the prescribed welcoming. Women typically do the same with one another. When greeting members of the opposite sex, shaking hands is less common, and it is wise for a man to follow the woman's lead in such situations, because some women will avoid any physical contact with unrelated men.[141] It also is quite common for women to avoid direct eye contact with men.[142]

Customs associated with politeness dictate that one should avoid confrontation. This frequently leads to people saying what they think you want to hear rather than the truth. When dealing with a potentially

© Dennis S. Hurd / flickr.com
Women greeting one another

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[139] Odete Maria Viera and Swarnalatha Vemuri, "Sri Lanka: A Cultural Profile" (Anti-Racism, Multiculturalism and Native Issues [AMNI] Centre, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, 2002), http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/srilanka/srilanka_eng.pdf

[140] Royston Ellis, *Sri Lanka: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2005), 269.

[141] Kwintessential, "Sri Lanka—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," n.d., http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/srilanka.html

[142] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Eye Contact," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=10&CID=190

sensitive matter, be prepared for a lengthy process leading to a definite answer.[143]

Personal space can be a tricky matter. In a business situation, you are expected to provide a fairly healthy distance from others, especially between members of the opposite sex. This is much less common in public transportation or other crowded situations, however, where personal space is practically nonexistent.[144] As in most matters, younger people tend to adhere to a more Western conception of space.[145]

Gestures

The head wobble, common in most South Asian cultures, appears to the Western eye as something between a nod for affirmation and a shake of the head for negation. The ambiguity is intentional, since it is used for both meanings. One must learn to gauge the position of the head and the speed of the gesture to determine the intended meaning, and even that is an inexact science.[146]

© Johanan Ottensooser / flickr.com
Youths in northeast Sri Lanka

To beckon, one should extend the arm with palm down and simulate a scratching motion with the fingers.[147]

Time

The Tamil concept of timeliness runs counter to that found in the United States and much of Europe. Westerners should be prepared to wait when keeping appointments. Not surprisingly, public transportation schedules are not particularly exact and a frequent target of Sri Lankan humor.[148]

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[143] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Communication Style," n.d.,
http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=8&CID=190
[144] Joe Cummings, *Sri Lanka* (London: Lonely Planet, 2006), 335.
[145] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Personal Space & Touching," n.d.,
http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=9&CID=190
[146] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Gestures," n.d.,
http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=13&CID=190
[147] *Doing Business Internationally: The Resource for Business and Social Etiquette* (Princeton: Princeton Training Press, 1999), 503.
[148] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Views of Time," n.d.,
http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=11&CID=190

Hospitality & Gift-Giving

When visiting a Sri Lankan home, one should wear clean and conservative clothing and remove shoes before entering. It is generally appropriate but not expected to bring a gift. Sweets, fruit, and flowers are common presents. Avoid the colors black and white because they are associated with death. If the family has small children, a toy is an appropriate gift.[149]

Exchange 6: I really appreciate your hospitality.

Guest:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	ungal virundon balai naan varaverkirane.
Host:	It's my pleasure.	idu yenakku malschi alikkiradu.

Tamils give and receive gifts with two hands, frequently demonstrating politeness and respect by touching their right forearm with their left while offering the gift with their right hand. The recipient typically does not open the gift when received. Gift-giving is a reciprocal act in Tamil culture.[150]

Eating Customs

Dining customs vary according to socioeconomic and religious background, but without exception, the host will treat the guest with the utmost hospitality.[151] Guests should be aware that Hindus are quite sensitive about food. If anyone outside their religion or caste touches the food, they believe ritual pollution has taken place. For this reason, guests should drink from separate glasses and wait to be served. This stricture applies to both food and drink.[152]

Exchange 7: The food tastes so good.

Guest:	The food tastes so good.	inda unnavu migavum rusiiyaga ulladu.
Host:	Thanks for the compliment.	paarattuthalukku naanri.

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[149] *What is Hinduism? Modern Adventures into a Profound Global Faith* (Kapaa, HI: Himalayan Academy, 2007), 296.

[150] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Gift Giving," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=23&CID=190

[151] *What is Hinduism? Modern Adventures into a Profound Global Faith* (Kapaa, HI: Himalayan Academy, 2007), 295.

[152] Rupa K. Bose, *India: Business Checklists: An Essential Guide to Doing Business* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 56.

Because Tamils typically eat meals with fingers rather than cutlery, guests should wash their hands thoroughly before sitting down for the meal. The left hand is reserved for dealing with sanitary issues in the restroom. Refrain from using it when eating or interacting with others.[153] The host will probably direct the guest where to sit, and one should wait to be seated until asked. In accordance with the social hierarchy, the hosts will likely serve those present at the meal in a certain order, with the guest served first, followed by the men, and then the children. In traditional settings, such as rural areas, women prepare and serve the meal, and thus they will likely eat afterward.[154]

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
Tamil food

Exchange 8: What is the name of this dish?

Guest:	What is the name of this dish?	inda padartithin peyyar yenna?
Host:	This is *rasam*.	idu rasam.

The cuisine of the Tamil people is primarily vegetarian. Hindus do not eat beef. As with most South Asian cuisine, Tamil food tends to be quite spicy by Western standards. Common Tamil dishes include *rasam*, a spicy and sour soup; *kool*, a spicy seafood soup popular in the north; and *vadai*, a deep-fried bread made from black gram flour.[155]

© Kitchen Surfer / flickr.com
Rasam

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[153] Lucy Debenham, "Etiquette in Sri Lanka," TravelEtiquette.co.uk, 25 July 2010, http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/EtiquetteSriLanka.html

[154] Neo, "A Foreigner's Guide to Traditional Indian Dining Etiquette," neoIndian.org, 23 April 2010, http://neoindian.org/2010/04/23/a-foreigners-guide-to-traditional-indian-dining-etiquette/

[155] Douglas Bullis and Wendy Hutton, *The Food of Sri Lanka: Authentic Recipes from the Isle of Gems* (Boston: Periplus Editions, 2001), 13.

Dress Codes

Dress is typically quite conservative for both men and women. The traditional salwar kameez and sari are common wear for women. Clothing is usually made of light, breathable materials to compensate for the oppressive heat.[156, 157] Men are likely to wear a sarong, a span of cloth wrapped around the lower part of the body, in place of jeans or trousers.[158]

Exchange 9: Is this acceptable to wear?

Visitor:	Is this acceptable to wear?	idu annivadarku thakundada?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam

But the younger generations, especially in urban areas, are more likely to wear Western-style clothing. T-shirts, blue jeans, and sneakers are common wear.

Non-Religious Celebrations

Though most holidays in Sri Lanka are religious, there are a few secular holidays. On 4 February, Sri Lankans celebrate Independence Day to commemorate the country's independence from the United Kingdom on that date in 1948. In April (the date varies based on the lunar calendar), Tamils and Sinhalese both celebrate their New Year, which has some religious overtones but is primarily a secular holiday. May Day is celebrated on the first of that month. It was added to the list of holidays in 1956 as a concession to leftist parties who wished to observe a day of solidarity with other such organizations around the world.[159] A new holiday, Victory Day, is celebrated on 18 May. On that day, Sri Lankans celebrate the end of the civil war that devastated the country for nearly three decades.[160]

© Sriyan Indika / flickr.com
Buying Avurudu essentials

Among the Tamils there is another celebration that is neither sanctioned by the state nor celebrated among any other ethnic groups of the island. In fact, it is only celebrated by a particular faction among the Tamils. It is Heroes' Day (27 November). The holiday was a central holiday of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), commemorating those who died as cadres of the terrorist organization in their struggle against the government. It is unclear just how

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[156] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Dress," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=19&CID=190
[157] Culture Crossing, "Sri Lanka: Negotiations," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=22&CID=190
[158] Marion Armstrong, ed., *Peoples of Eastern Asia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2005), 9: 519.
[159] Philip Sheldon Foner, *May Day: A Short History of the International Workers' Holiday* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 144.
[160] Ariyarathne Ranabahu, "Vijayag Grahanaye Deveni Samaruma Galu Muwadoradi Abhimanawath Ayourin," *Colombo Lankadeepa* (Sinhala), 28 May 2011, http://www.lankadeepa.lk/

many Tamils continue to celebrate this holiday in Sri Lanka, though it remains popular among some communities of the Tamil diaspora in the West.[161]

Other

Although the Tamils and Sinhalese had a long history of relatively peaceful coexistence on the island, the civil war fundamentally changed that in many ways. Sri Lankans are still dealing with the aftermath of the conflict. While many are optimistic about the future, some continue to harbor bad feelings toward other ethnic groups and, in some cases, other segments of their own ethnic group.[162] It is best not to discuss ethnic politics or the war unless you know the person very well and are certain that doing so is not going to elicit an emotional response. Err on the side of caution.

© Alain Bachellier / flickr.com
Continued tensions

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[161] Catherine Brun and Nicholas Van Hear, "Shifting Between the Local and Transnational: Space, Power and Politics in War-Torn Sri Lanka," in *Trysts with Democracy: Political Practice in South Asia*, eds. Stig Toft Madsen, Kenneth Bo Nielsen, and Uwe Skoda (New York: Anthem Press, 2011), 239–240.

[162] A.K. Jeewaka Saman Kumara, "National Security Dilemmas of Small States: A Case Study of Sri Lanka" (dissertation, University of Pune, 2010), 73–114.

Dos and Don'ts

Do show respect to all religious images and representatives.

Do ask permission before entering a religious site: temple, mosque, church, shrine, etc.

Do wear shoes that are easy to get in and out of, and bring a scarf if you plan to visit religious sites.

Do remove your shoes before you enter a religious site or a home.

Do obtain permission before taking photographs of people.

Do use your right hand, not your left, to eat or drink or to give or receive objects.

Do always use professional titles when addressing people.

Do say "no thank you" politely. Hands are held in the starting position of the *namaskaram* (palms together, fingers up) and then twisted so the palms are opened outwards.

Do bring a small gift, sweets, or toy when visiting a Tamil household.

Do not touch anyone on the head or shoulders, including children.

Do not point to a person using your forefinger. Instead, use your upturned hand.

Do not touch a person or a religious symbol with your feet.

Do not wear leather inside a temple.

Do not take photographs inside a religious temple without express permission.

Do not point your foot or the sole of your foot at anyone, whether you are seated or standing.

Do not touch other people's food, dishes, or cooking tools with your hand, spoon, etc.

Do not eat from other people's plates or drink from their cups, glasses, or bottles.

Do not drink water from the tap or public wells unless it has been boiled.

Do not initiate handshakes with women.

Do not point upward with the middle finger. It is obscene in the United States and equally so in Sri Lanka.

Do not use obscene language. Many may be familiar with American slang and consider this kind of language extremely offensive.

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Hindu beliefs shape Tamil conventions of honor and values.
   TRUE
   Because 90% of the population adheres to Hinduism, they accept the place within the caste system into which they are born, which determines their aspirations and relationships throughout life.

2. It is perfectly acceptable for men to shake hands with Tamil women in most settings.
   FALSE
   When greeting members of the opposite sex, handshaking is uncommon, and it is wise for a man to follow the woman's lead in such situations, because some women will avoid any physical contact with unrelated men.

3. Among Tamils, the head wobble is a gesture that always conveys a positive response.
   FALSE
   The ambiguity of the head wobble is intentional because it is used for both affirmation and negation. One must learn to gauge the position of the head and the speed of the gesture to determine the intended meaning, and even that is an inexact science.

4. Similar to Europeans, Tamils typically eat with utensils—a practice that likely dates to the colonial period.
   FALSE
   Tamils typically eat meals with fingers rather than cutlery, and guests should wash their hands thoroughly before sitting down for a meal.

5. It is best not to discuss ethnic politics or the civil war unless you know the person well and are certain that doing so is not going to elicit an emotional response.
   TRUE
   Sri Lankans are still dealing with the aftermath of the conflict. While many are optimistic about the future, some continue to harbor bad feelings toward other ethnic groups and, in some cases, other segments of their own ethnic group.

Chapter 4 Urban Life

Urbanization

Only 14% of the entire Sri Lankan population is urban, and that percentage is considerably lower in Tamil areas.[163] While the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka have largely remained rural, a handful of mid-sized cities have emerged over the last 200 years.

Given the demographic shifts associated with the civil war, it is difficult to estimate the current population of any of these cities.[164] During the war, many fled the violence that predominated in the areas under the control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and along the boundaries between these areas and government-controlled territory. This served to drastically reduce the population of most Tamil-majority cities. With the conclusion of the war, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are beginning to move back into these cities, but the ethnic composition of these new populations will not necessarily reflect prewar figures. In fact, the mass exodus of the Tamil population to Europe and North America almost assures that it will not.

Jaffna

Jaffna, the city most central to Tamil identity in Sri Lanka, developed as the capital of the once independent Tamil Kingdom of Jaffna. It remained an important port under the successive waves of European imperialism that subjugated the rest of the country. But the recently concluded civil war devastated the city, leaving much of it in rubble and with a much smaller population. The once thriving Muslim community of Jaffna was decimated by the LTTE.[165] Long a thriving port, the civil war shut off trade to the region, and it has yet to regain its population or commerce.

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
Stanley Road, Jaffna

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[163] Central Intelligence Agency, "Sri Lanka: People: Urbanization," in *The World Factbook*, 22 June 2011, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html

[164] S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe and Vidyamali Samarasinghe, *Historical Dictionary of Sri Lanka* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1998), 6–7.

[165] Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 153.

Batticaloa

Batticaloa was settled as a port and gained prominence under European colonialism. In the 1970s and 1980s, it became a hotbed for Tamil separatism.[166] Hit hard by the resultant civil war and battered by the 2004 South Asian tsunami, the city is a shadow of its former self.[167] The 2011 census result is expected to show fundamental demographic changes.

Trincomalee

Trincomalee was settled in Sri Lanka's distant past by people emigrating from North India. The city developed as a port centered on one of the world's deepest harbors. The Allied fleet utilized the harbor during World War II, and the Japanese targeted the city as a result.[168] Although vibrant during the colonial era, the development of the port facilities in and around Colombo had largely diverted traffic long before the civil war began. In the early 1980s, the United States considered building a naval base near Trinc omalee; however, the civil war ended that plan.

© Dennis S. Hurd / flickr.com
Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Major changes in the ethnic composition of the city will likely be reflected in the 2011 census, because Sinhalese settlers frequently moved in to inhabit abandoned Tamil properties.[169]

Vavuniya

Vavuniya, referred to as the gateway to the north, was of strategic importance during the civil war. Consequently, a major army installation was established on the outskirts of town. The army suspected the loyalty of the predominantly Tamil local population. Thus, a new community of predominantly Sinhalese grew around the camp, providing services to the troops.[170] The city was the site of many battles during the war and, as a result, the demographics have altered significantly—a point that will almost certainly be demonstrated by the results of the 2011 Sri Lankan census.[171]

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[166] John Clifford Holt, Robin Kirk, and Orin Starn, *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 517.

[167] Sisira Jayasuriya and Peter McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami: Aid and Reconstruction after a Disaster* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2010), 126, 139.

[168] Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941–1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), 104–112.

[169] Ashok Gladston Xavier, "Addressing Social Conflicts in Sri Lanka: Social Development Interventions by a People's Organisation," in *Social Work in Extremis: Lessons for Social Work Internationally*, eds. Michael Lavalette and Vassilis Ioakimidis (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2011), 96.

[170] Ashok Gladston Xavier, "Addressing Social Conflicts in Sri Lanka: Social Development Interventions by a People's Organisation," in *Social Work in Extremis: Lessons for Social Work Internationally*, eds. Michael Lavalette and Vassilis Ioakimidis (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2011), 99–100.

[171] Joe William, "Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka," in *The Fleeing People of South Asia: Selections from Refugee Watch*, ed. Sibaji Pratim Basu (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 152–154.

Colombo

Although not a Tamil city, the nation's capital has a sizable Tamil population that is 18.2% of its total.[172] The Colombo urban area has a population of more than 2.1 million.[173] In the opening scenes of the civil war, mobs subjected the Tamil residents of Colombo to intense violence and persecution. Many Tamils fled the city in the ensuing years; however, many other Tamils fled the combat zones of the north and east for the relative security of the capital during the height of the conflict.[174, 175]

© Sammu / flickr.com
Colombo by night

Urban Work Issues

With donations pouring in from nongovernment organizations, international institutions, and foreign nations, Sri Lanka is reconstructing areas of the country damaged by the civil war.[176] Such projects should generate work for the impacted communities, including IDPs who are returning to the area. Because an estimated 60% of the displaced population was previously engaged in either farming or fishing, however, many lack the skills to gain jobs in construction. Thus, demining farmland and fishing areas is essential in order for these people to return to their former lines of work.[177] Retraining those who wish to seek employment in other sectors of the economy is also essential. Though the government's reconstruction programs are important to the Tamil people, some observers worry that rather than using resources to benefit Tamil workers, the government will use the lure of high-paying construction jobs to entice a new wave of Sinhalese settlers to the traditionally Tamil homeland.[178]

© Johanan Ottensooser / flickr.com
Tamil fishermen

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[172] Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, "Population by Ethnic Group and District, Census 1981, 2001," n.d., http://www.statistics.gov.lk/abstract2010/chapters/Chap2/AB2-11.pdf

[173] Ravi Pereira, "Colombo: Institutionalizing an Environmental Management Strategy," Metropolitan Environmental Improvement Programme, United Nations Development Programme, n.d., http://ww2.unhabitat.org/programmes/uef/cities/summary/colombo.htm

[174] Colleen Sullivan, "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 2nd edition, ed. Clarence August Martin (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 354-356,

[175] Benedikt Korf and Kalinga Tudor Silva, "Poverty, Ethnicity and Conflict in Sri Lanka" (paper, Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy conference, University of Manchester, UK, 2003), http://www.chronicpoverty.org/uploads/publication_files/CP_2003_KorfSilva.pdf

[176] Press Trust of India, "Lanka Asked to Expedite Construction of Homes for IDPs: PC," *The Statesman (India)*, 6 November 2010, http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=347606&catid=36

[177] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council, "Sri Lanka: IDPs and Returnees Remain in Need of Protection and Assistance," 14 January 2011, 33–34, http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/%28httpInfoFiles%29/03D15A8CBF11229DC12578180036CD93/$file/Sri+Lanka+-+January+2011.pdf

[178] Kristine Höglund and Camilla Orjuela, "Winning the Peace: Conflict Prevention after a Victor's Peace in Sri Lanka," *Contemporary Social Science* 6, no. 1 (2011): 19–37.

Daily Urban Life

It is difficult to give an accurate impression of daily life in the formerly urban areas of the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka. Much that was normal was greatly disrupted by the war, and with the influx of IDPs and the newly negotiated space between them and those who remained during the war, society has not yet recovered.[179, 180]

© Sarvodaya Shramadana / flickr.com
Drinking water, Batticaloa

In Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee, where the cities have been under government control for several years, the availability of many daily necessities has largely returned to prewar levels. In more remote locations such as Vavuniya and Kilinochchi, however, safe water, adequate shelter, and other necessities are scarce. The Sri Lankan government, in conjunction with international agencies and nongovernment organizations, is moving to address these problems through a number of major projects.[181]

For most Tamils, the day is passed in working to make ends meet, scratching out an existence in cities that that have lost their previous splendor.

Urban Healthcare

Healthcare is government-run in Sri Lanka. But to say that all healthcare is equal in the country would be a gross misstatement. Not only do private practices exist outside the government system for those who can afford them, but there is also a great disparity between urban and rural areas, and between areas that remained under government control during the war and those that were in the hands of the LTTE.[182] Although government facilities may be fully equipped and have well-trained personnel, patients are frequently forced to wait in long queues to be seen, and may be required to come back the next day.[183, 184]

Exchange 10: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	inge aarugil marrutthuva mannai irrukiratha?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	aamaam, uurkku naduvil irrukirrathu.

[179] Kath Noble, "A Bittersweet Anniversary for Sri Lanka," *The Island (Sri Lanka)*, 18 May 2011, http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=25670

[180] *Daily News (Sri Lanka)*, "Another Group of IDPs Resettled," 29 June 2011, http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/06/29/news46.asp

[181] United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, "2011 UNHCR Country Operations Profile—Sri Lanka," 2001–2011, http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4878e6.html

[182] David A. Reisman, *Health Tourism: Social Welfare through International Trade* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2010), 173–174.

[183] Théodore H. MacDonald, *Removing the Barriers to Global Health Equity* (New York: Radcliffe, 2009), 189.

[184] Z. Paskins, "Sri Lankan Health Care Provision and Medical Education: A Discussion," *Postgraduate Medical Journal* 77 (2001), 139–143, doi:10.1136/pmj.77.904.139

Though access to healthcare is spotty in the Tamil areas of the country, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health has worked closely with nongovernment organizations, most notably Doctors Without Borders, to revive the healthcare system in areas formerly controlled by the LTTE.[185] Similarly, the World Health Organization has aided the Ministry of Health and the country's Northern Provincial Ministry of Health to provide healthcare for IDPs returning from refugee camps. This assistance has supported the rehabilitation of facilities in Kilinochchi, Mannar, and Mullaitivu.[186]

Exchange 11: I have pain, doctor. Can you help me?

Patient:	I have pain, doctor. Can you help me?	yenakku valikkirathu dakttor neengal yennakku uddava mudiyuma?
Doctor:	Yes, I can help you.	aamaam, yennal unakku uddava mudiyum.

Although most communicable diseases have been eradicated, dengue and mental health problems are major problems. Because of the dryness that persists in much of the Tamil north, malaria is of little concern.[187]

Education

Four stages of education are offered in Sri Lanka, although not all are publicly provided or funded. In addition to government-run schools for grades 1–13, a parallel private school system offers those who can afford it an alternative. Instruction is in Tamil, Sinhala, or English, depending on the needs of students and the capabilities of faculty.[188]

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
A Jaffna high school

As with most institutions in the Tamil areas of the island, the educational system was profoundly impacted by the civil war. The LTTE regularly abducted children from schools to forcibly serve in the organization. Massive displacement of populations created environments in which instruction was virtually impossible.[189] The University of Jaffna was sporadically closed throughout the duration of the civil war and was heavily damaged, especially in shelling conducted by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF). All these factors left many in the Tamil areas without schools at all levels.[190]

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[185] Doctors Without Borders, "Field News: Northern Sri Lanka: MSF Medical Priorities," 11 December 2009, http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/article.cfm?id=4118&cat=field-news
[186] Edwin Salvador, H. Yakandwala, and Kanthi Ariyarathne, "WHO Support to Humanitarian Efforts in Sri Lanka," *WHO Sri Lanka* 5, no. 1 (January–June 2010), 4.
[187] World Health Organization, "Sri Lanka: Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance," May 2011, http://www.whosrilanka.org/LinkFiles/WHO_Sri_Lanka_CCS_Brief.pdf
[188] Denise E. Murray and MaryAnn Christison, *What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume I: Understanding Learning* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 38.
[189] Sarah Dryden-Peterson, "Conflict, Education and Displacement," *Conflict & Education* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1–5.
[190] Rajan Hoole, "Sri Lanka: Ethnic Strife, Fratricide, and the Peace vs. Human Rights Dilemma," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 1, no. 1 (2009): 120–139.

Early Childhood Development

The first educational stage, early childhood development, is aimed at children between 3 and 5 years of age and includes preschools, Montessori schools, and kindergartens. This stage is exclusively the domain of private enterprise.[191]

Primary and Secondary Education

This stage is the beginning of the compulsory education system and comprises three substages. The first of these is primary education and includes grades 1–5. At the conclusion of 5th grade, students can take the exceedingly rigorous and competitive scholarship examination. A high mark on this exam offers students the opportunity to enroll in the prestigious national schools.[192]

Exchange 12: Is there a school nearby?

Official:	Is there a school nearby?	aarugil pallikudam irrukkiratha?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam

Compulsory education also includes the junior secondary education cycle that encompasses 6th through 9th grades. After completing this level, students can choose to continue through the academic system or enroll in technical training. Those continuing will enter the senior secondary education cycle that covers 10th through 13th grades. Upon completion of the 11th grade, students can again opt to switch to the technical education track. At this point, students also sit for the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level examination. Based on the results of this examination, qualified students continue on for the senior secondary cycle, which comprises 12th and 13th grade and focuses on preparation for university studies.

Upon completing this level, students take the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level, the results of which determine one's admittance to college as well as one's choices for a major field of study.[193] This examination is extremely competitive, and parents frequently enroll their children in private tutoring courses aimed at preparing them for the exam.[194]

Exchange 13: Do your children go to school?

Official:	Do your children go to school?	un pillaigal pallikkudam pogirargalla?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam

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[191] Irving Epstein and Jyotsna Pattnaik, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Children's Issues Worldwide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 1:421.

[192] Irving Epstein and Jyotsna Pattnaik, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Children's Issues Worldwide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 1:421.

[193] World Education Services—Canada, "World Education Profiles: Sri Lanka," 6 May 2004, http://www.wes.org/ca/wedb/srilanka/ceedov.htm

[194] Markus Maurer, *Skill Formation Regimes in South Asia: A Comparative Study on the Path-Dependent Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training for the Garment Industry* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 131.

Tertiary Education

Those fortunate enough to score well on the advanced examination move on to university studies, the third stage in Sri Lanka's educational system. Those who perform less well on the examination have the option of attending professional and other non-university educational institutes offering advanced technical education. Many with financial means, however, opt to attend universities overseas. Regardless of which track a student has followed, the successful completion of university, professional, or technical education can lead to postgraduate studies, the fourth stage of Sri Lanka's educational system.[195]

In a controversial move, the Sri Lankan government began a new program in the spring of 2011 aimed at developing leadership skills among college students. The program requires students to attend a 3-week course at a military installation during which they are instructed in leadership, self-defense, personal hygiene, first aid, history, and a host of topics revolving around civics.[196] Critics have condemned the government's intrusion into the curriculum, and fear that such training will lead to government indoctrination.[197]

Public Places

Restaurants

Having been subjected to nearly 30 years of civil war, the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka have not, in recent times, catered to tourists. Many of the eating establishments are geared toward the local market. While this means one will be treated to authentic regional cuisine, it also means that these establishments are not accustomed to providing the level of service or sanitation that many Westerners expect. Be certain to avoid drinking tap water or anything that is not served in a sealed container. Likewise, do not ask for ice, because waterborne impurities and illnesses are common.[198]

© Miran Rijavec / flickr.com
Green Park Beach Hotel

Exchange 14: Do you have dessert?

Customer:	Do you have dessert?	ungalidm innippu pazhavagai iIrrukiratha?
Waiter:	Yes, we have *semiya payasam*.	aamaam, engalidam semiya payasam irrukkirthau.

Be sure to tip liberally. Many restaurant workers are still trying to put their lives back together, and any act of kindness will be greatly appreciated.[199]

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[195] Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, The World Bank, "The Education System: Policies, Enrollment and Organization," in *Treasures of the Education System: Education System in Sri Lanka: Restoring Performance, Expanding Opportunities and Enhancing Prospects* (Colombo: The World Bank Colombo Office, 2004), 4.
[196] Chrisni Mendis, "A Beginning to Sri Lanka's Educational Prosperity," *Daily News (Sri Lanka)*, 17 June 2011, http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/06/17/fea03.asp
[197] Tisaranee Gunasekara, "Sleepwalking into Unfreedom," *The Sunday Leader (Sri Lanka)*, 29 May 2011, http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2011/05/29/sleepwalking-into-unfreedom/
[198] Edward Aves, *Footprint Sri Lanka* (Bath, UK: Footprint Handbooks, 2003), 52.
[199] Gavin Thomas, *The Rough Guide to Sri Lanka* (New York: Rough Guides, 2009), 71.

Exchange 15: Please bring me the bill.

Customer:	Please bring me the bill.	dayuvu cheidhu receiptyi ennidam kondu tharavum.
Waiter:	Okay.	nalladu.

Marketplace

Just as in any South Asian city, markets are common in the Tamil cities of Sri Lanka. You can buy just about any commodity imaginable at these open-air bazaars: food, clothing, art, Ayurvedic medicines, and pirated software. Haggling is expected, and prices are typically inflated in anticipation of such.[200]

Pirated merchandise is readily available in any Sri Lankan city. Legal software, movies, and related media are available at reputable establishments.[201]

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
Fish market, Jaffna

Exchange 16: Is the bazaar nearby?

Visitor:	Is the bazaar nearby?	kadaitheru aarugil irrukiratha?
Local:	Yes, on the right.	aam, valadhupakkam.

Urban Traffic & Transportation

One can find nearly any mode of locomotion in the cities of Sri Lanka. Elephants toting loads lumber alongside bicyclists doubling up on a frame made for one, while buses, cars, three-

wheelers, and commercial trucks jockey for position in streets built for a fraction of the traffic that congests them throughout most of the business day. To confound the situation further, the few existing traffic laws are largely ignored, and traffic signals, when present, are seldom in working condition. Pedestrians should be wary: even though pedestrians might technically have the right of way, might is right on the roadways. Yet the local pedestrians will weave in and out of traffic regardless of its speed.[202] Obviously, this concern diminishes in proportion to the size of a community.

© Aidan Jones / flickr.com
Three-wheelers

Exchange 17: Is there a gas station nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a gas station nearby?	aarugil gaas staecion irrukkiratha?
Local:	No.	illai.

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[200] Gavin Thomas, *The Rough Guide to Sri Lanka* (New York: Rough Guides, 2009), 56–60.

[201] Brett Atkinson, *Sri Lanka* (London, UK: Lonely Planet, 2009), 38.

[202] Joe Cummings, *Sri Lanka* (London: Lonely Planet, 2006), 106, 325.

Street Crime & Solicitations

Petty crime such as pick-pocketing and theft is common. Credit card fraud is a major concern as well, although in many of the Tamil areas, credit card transactions are seldom possible. Additionally, sophisticated criminal rings have engaged in identity theft and bank fraud. One should only use credit cards in highly reputable establishments and pay in cash whenever possible. Avoid displaying large amounts of money, because this could make you a potential target for criminals.[203]

© Petr Kosina / flickr.com
A beggar in Sri Lanka

Exchange 18: Do you accept U.S. dollars?

Buyer:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	neengal yues doler yetru kolveergala?
Seller:	No, we only accept rupees.	illai. rupai matumthan naangal yetru kolvom.

Beggars are a common sight, especially in areas with high amounts foot traffic. Giving donations to one will typically draw the attention of others, some of whom might be rather aggressive. It is advisable instead to give money to a registered charity if one feels the desire to give.[204]

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[203] Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Sri Lanka: Country Specific Information: Crime," 12 April 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1025.html#crime
[204] Edward Aves, *Footprint Sri Lanka* (Bath, UK: Footprint Handbooks, 2003), 36.

Chapter 4 Assessment

1. Many of the most prominent Tamil-majority cities in Sri Lanka are port cities.
   TRUE
   Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee are all port cities.

2. The 2011 Sri Lankan census is expected to show significant shifts in the demographics of historically Tamil urban centers.
   TRUE
   With nearly 1 million Tamils having fled the country and another million scattered across Sri Lanka as IDPs, the Sinhalese and Muslims have moved into areas once predominantly Tamil.

3. Healthcare is primarily a private enterprise in Sri Lanka.
   FALSE
   Healthcare is a primarily socialized, government-run endeavor, although a parallel system of private healthcare exists for those who can afford to pay.

4. The drinking water in Sri Lanka is safe.
   FALSE
   Be certain to avoid drinking anything that is not served in a sealed container. Likewise, do not ask for ice.

5. Petty crime runs rampant in Sri Lankan cities.
   TRUE
   Petty crime such as pick-pocketing and personal property theft is common. Credit card fraud also is a major concern, although in many of the Tamil areas credit card transactions are seldom possible.

Chapter 5 Rural Life

Introduction

In a country where the population is 86% rural, the Tamils live in some of the most remote locations of Sri Lanka. Land reforms have made issues of land ownership bewildering. This situation will be compounded by the post-war return of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Transportation, health care, and educations services taken for granted by many in the urban areas are not as readily accessible in rural areas, and much of the infrastructure in rural Tamil-majority areas was heavily damaged in the nearly three decades of civil war.

Land Distribution-Ownership

About 56% of the land in Sri Lanka is dedicated to agriculture.[205] Nearly 820,000 ha (2 million ac) of the total 3.7 million ha (9.1 million ac) is used for growing rice, and another 780,000 ha (1.9 million ac) are managed by locally- and foreign-owned plantations mainly for the production of tea, rubber, and coconuts, which are Sri Lanka's major export commodities. Of the total agricultural land, 900,000 ha (2.2 million ac) consists of homesteads centered on subsistence farming.[206]

© Johanan Ottensooser / flickr.com
Farmer near Trincomalee

Exchange 19: What crops do you grow?

Official:	What crops do you grow?	enda payir nee valarkiraai?
Local:	I grow rice.	naan arisi valarkirene.

The Sri Lankan government has long pursued the creation of land settlement plans for the purpose of developing and distributing state-owned lands among the rural poor, especially in the northern dry zone. Through such legislative efforts, the government has provided sharecroppers with subsidies, low-interest credit, extension services, free irrigation facilities, tax breaks, and guaranteed prices, although the government retains ownership of the land.[207]

Those applying to participate in the settlement programs, usually Sinhalese in ethnicity, have received permits to occupy land, and pay an annual fee to maintain their permit. Settlers have been paid for clearing plots and preparing the land. The government also has paid them to build irrigation works and roads. Although not granted ownership of the land, qualified settlers receive a type of property title. Because of government restrictions, however, settlers can neither transfer the title nor lease or mortgage the land without government approval. Accordingly, these policies

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[205] G.A.D. Perera, "The Secondary Forest Situation in Sri Lanka: A Review," *Journal of Tropical Forest Science* 14, no. 4 (2001): 768–785.

[206] Jane's Defence, "Natural Resources, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 27 April 2011.

[207] Sunil Bastian, "The Politics of Land Reform and Land Settlement in Sri Lanka" (paper, Panos South Asia, Colombo, Sri Lanka, n.d.),
http://www.panossouthasia.org/PDF/Politics%20of%20Land%20Reform%20in%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf

aimed at land settlements in the dry zone have been a major source of grievance among Tamils. To date, the largest settlement program has been the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme. Instituted in 1979 and financed by Western donors, the project led to the construction of five dams for hydroelectric generation and irrigation development.[208, 209]

Land Reform Legislation

The Land Reform Law of 1972 placed a limit on land ownership of 20 ha (50 ac) per person, or 10 ha (25 ac) of paddy fields. Privately-owned land in excess of this limit was seized by the government. But this accomplished little because less than 405,000 ha (1 million ac) or 13% of the total were actually seized and redistributed.[210] In 1975, the government nationalized the plantation system, seizing domestically- and foreign-owned estates. Most of the land seized under the 1972 and 1975 legislations remained under

© Gane / flickr.com
Farmland near Kandarodai

government ownership via the auspices of the Sri Lanka State Plantation Corporation (SLSPC) and the Janatha Estate Development Board (JEDB).[211]

In 1992, recognizing its gross mismanagement of the plantations, the government handed over management to 24 private companies, and in 1995 the properties were sold, passing again into the hands of private companies.[212]

The Title Registration Act of 1998 has also been controversial. Titles issued under the new act—aimed at addressing problems with registration—supersede all preexisting titles to properties.[213] Despite best intentions, the legislation is likely to be controversial among settlers and returning internally displaced persons (IDPs). The latter group will likely seek to regain properties abandoned during the civil war, and the former will use newly-issued titles to support their claims to the properties.[214]

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[208] Peter C. Bloch, *Land Tenure Issues in Sri Lanka: A Brief Overview* (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1988).

[209] Nimal Sanderatne, "Agricultural Development: Controversial Issues," in *Economic Policy in Sri Lanka: Issues and Debates*, ed. Saman Kelegama (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 195–212.

[210] Nimal Sanderatne, "Agricultural Development: Controversial Issues," in *Economic Policy in Sri Lanka: Issues and Debates*, ed. Saman Kelegama (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 195–212.

[211] Lakshman Yapa, "The Poverty Discourse and the Poor in Sri Lanka," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23, no. 1 (1998): 95–115.

[212] Rozana Salih, "Privatization in Sri Lanka," in *Privatization in South Asia: Minimizing Negative Social effects through Restructuring*, ed. Gopal Joshi (Bangkok: Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Labour Organization, 2001), 175-209, http://www2.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/paper/privatize/chap6.pdf

[213] Rathnamali Rubasinghe, "Evaluating Acceptability of Land Titling: A Case Study in Sri Lanka" (master's thesis, International Institute for Geo-Information and Earth Observation, University of Twente, Netherlands, 2010).

[214] Jane's Defence, "Executive Summary, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 21 April 2011.

Exchange 20: Do you own this land?

Official:	Do you own this land?	inda nilam unnakku sondamanada?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam.

Although the Sri Lankan government signed an accord with India that promised not to encourage Sinhalese to settle in historically Tamil areas, many Sinhalese continue to do so, with or without government encouragement. During the war, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) actively targeted Sinhalese settlers. Land ownership and reform remains a contentious issue in the post-war reconciliation process. [215]

Rural Economy: Typical Sources of Income in Rural Areas

Under British colonial rule, the Sri Lankan economy was primarily driven by exports—tea, rubber, and coconuts—produced on large, privately-owned plantations. But reliance upon this sector, which was tied to speculation in the world commodities markets, created an unstable economy. An industrial sector that might offset the fluctuating commodity prices and process those commodities did not exist. [216]

Sri Lanka's fragile economic system continued in the years immediately following independence in 1948. Although productivity declined in the 1970s while the government attempted to nationalize plantations and no new industries or agricultural enterprises were created, the government effectively dealt with the issue of food security. Sri Lanka, long dependent upon food imports, increased rice production to meet domestic needs. Cultivated primarily on small farms for subsistence and

© Rich Bee / flickr.com
Tamil tea picker

not export, "[F]arming rice is the most important economic activity for the majority of the people living in rural areas." [217] The increase in domestic rice production has been facilitated by modernization in agriculture. [218] While this increased productivity has addressed the country's food security, it has not provided a diversification of crops for lucrative exports. [219, 220]

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[215] Emilia Fagerlund, "The Tigers' Roar: Insurgent Violence Against Civilians in Sri Lanka," *Psychology & Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2011): 96–116.

[216] K.M. de Silva, "Sri Lanka: National Identity and the Impact of Colonialism," in *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 147–148.

[217] Encyclopedia of the Nations, "Sri Lanka—Agriculture, n.d., http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Sri-Lanka-AGRICULTURE.html

[218] Encyclopedia of the Nations, "Sri Lanka—Agriculture, n.d., http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Sri-Lanka-AGRICULTURE.html

[219] K.M. de Silva, "Sri Lanka: National Identity and the Impact of Colonialism," in *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 149.

[220] Jane's Defence, "Economy, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 27 April 2011.

The government has re-privatized the plantations, and today most Tamils continue to work in the agricultural and fishing sectors. The majority of workers on tea plantations are Tamil, even outside the historically Tamil areas of the island.

Rural Transportation

Since the conclusion of the civil war, the government has faced the challenge of repairing the roads in the country's north and east, a necessity for the revival of the economy in those areas. Highways connecting Jaffna and Batticaloa to the south have been reopened. In late 2010, the government announced its intention to build and reconstruct about 4,000 km (2,485 mi) of roadway, with special emphasis on the north and east. The projects' costs are expected to exceed USD 1 billion, most of which will come from foreign aid.[221]

© Ernest Rockwell / flickr.com
Road construction

Exchange 21: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	aarukil nalla hatto mechanic irrukkirara?
Local:	No.	illai.

The Sri Lankan railway system also suffered from the civil war, during which the LTTE destroyed an estimated 362 km (225 mi) of track. Much of the remaining track in the north and east needs repair from 30 years of neglect, the civil war, and the 2004 tsunami, which has presented another major challenge for the government's redevelopment efforts.[222]

Because of the disrepair of the railway system, the residents of rural areas have relied on more traditional means of transportation, such as bicycles, carts, beasts of burden, and walking.

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[221] Jane's Defence, "Infrastructure, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 27 April 2011.
[222] Jane's Defence, "Infrastructure, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 27 April 2011.

Health Issues

Healthcare is socialized in Sri Lanka, although rural facilities are short-staffed, ill-equipped, and small compared to those in urban areas. To address this issue, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health has worked closely with nongovernmental organizations, most notably Doctors Without Borders.[223] Similarly, the World Health Organization has helped the government to address the healthcare concerns of IDPs returning from refugee camps.[224]

Exchange 22: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	inge aarugil marrutthuva mannai irrukiratha?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	aamaam, uurkku naduvil irrukirrathu.

Mental health problems and injuries related to the civil war remain significant concerns among rural medical professionals, who are often inexperienced.[225, 226] Sri Lanka has long had one of the world's highest suicide rates, with an estimated 6,000 suicide deaths annually (far exceeding annual deaths from the 26-year civil war).[227] In the rural areas, one of the most common means of suicide is the ingestion or injection of pesticides.[228]

Other health concerns facing rural Sri Lanka are the excessive use of agro-chemicals, including DDT, and mosquito-borne and other diseases.[229]

Exchange 23: Do you know what is wrong?

Local:	Do you know what is wrong?	yenna thavernru unakku therruyuma?
Visitor:	No.	illai.

[223] Doctors Without Borders, "Field News: Northern Sri Lanka: MSF Medical Priorities," 11 December 2009, http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/article.cfm?id=4118&cat=field-news

[224] Country Office for Sri Lanka, World Health Organization, "WHO Country Cooperation Strategy 2006–2011: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka," September 2006, http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccs_lka_en.pdf

[225] Jane's Defence, "Geography, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 27 April 2011.

[226] Lalith Senarathna et al., "Personal and Professional Challenges in the Management of Deliberate Self-Poisoning Patients in Rural Sri Lanka: A Qualitative Study of Rural Hospital Doctors' Experiences and Perceptions," *BMC Public Health* 8 (2008): 373, http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/8/373 doi:10.1186/1471-2458-8-373

[227] Regional Office for South-East Asia, World Health Organization, "Mental Health and Substance Abuse: Facts and Figures: Suicide Prevention: Emerging from Darkness," 2011, http://www.searo.who.int/en/Section1174/Section1199/Section1567/Section1824_8078.htm

[228] Department for Health Action in Crises, World Health Organization, "Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance: Sri Lanka," April 2006, http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_lka_en.pdf

[229] Jane's Defence, "Geography, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 27 April 2011.

Daily Life in the Countryside

The daily life of Sri Lankan Tamils in rural areas is largely centered on agricultural or fishing pursuits, which means an early start and a workday largely dictated by the rising and setting of the sun or the comings and goings of the tide.

Traditionally, social and work lives are defined by the family and the com munity. Rural Tamils are almost exclusively Hindu, and that religion largely defines many of the social norms, social stratification, and observances of the Tamil communities, which frequently include daily worship.[230]

Children are expected to help around the home and in the fields. As a result, the education of rural children tends to suffer. This was greatly compounded by the insecurity and violence during the civil war and has yet to be adequately redressed in the postwar era.[231] Women, who traditionally filled the double role of tending the home and assisting with the agricultural work, are more frequently participating in the wage economy today.[232, 233]

© trailsl / flickr.com
Farm near Iranamadu

Exchange 24: Do you have a telephone?

Visitor:	Do you have a telephone?	unnidam tholaippesi irrukiratha?
Local:	Yes, the number is 23010035.	aamaam. athan enn irandu, munru, bugiyam onru, bugiyam, bugiyam,muunru iendu.

The rural areas are largely devoid of the modern conveniences that many in the cities take for granted.[234] Not only are the internet, television, telephones, and other services unavailable, but some communities remain completely outside the transportation system. As a result, many rural Tamils are completely removed from 21st-century modes of communication.

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[230] Darini Rajasingham-Senenayake, "Identity on the Borderline: Modernity, New Ethnicities, and the Unmaking of Multiculturalism in Sri Lanka," in *Perspectives on Modern South Asia: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*, ed. Kamala Visweswaran (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 199–208.

[231] Nisha Arunatilake, "Education Participation in Sri Lanka—Why All are not in School," *International Journal of Educational Research* 45, no. 3 (2006): 137–152. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2006.11.001

[232] Ananda Wickramasinghe and Donald Cameron, "Human and Social Capital in the Sri Lankan Tea Plantations: A Note of Dissent, Culture Beyond Universal and National Cultural Dimensions" (paper, Critical Management Studies Conference 2005, Waikato Management School, New Zealand, 2005), http://merlin.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2005/proceedings/strategy/Wickramasinghe.pdf

[233] Joke Schrijvers, "Womanhood and the Tamil Refugee," in *The Sri Lankan Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 523–541.

[234] Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000), 501.

Who's in Charge

Under the provisions of the 13th Amendment to the 1978 Sri Lankan Constitution, the form of local governance was fundamentally altered. Scrapping the district councils, local governance in rural areas was further decentralized with the creation of *Pradeshiya Sabha*, essentially village councils. Additionally, the election of members of local government was changed from ward-based representation to proportional representation. The office of mayor/chairman for these bodies was taken away from the council and placed in the hands of the majority party.[235]

© Umapathy / Panoramio.com
Village irrigation project

In the closely watched local elections of 17 March 2011, Sri Lankan voters cast their ballots for 3,036 seats in 234 of 335 local governments throughout the country. An additional 67 selections were postponed because of allegations of ineligibility leveled against candidates. With the completion of the civil war, elections were held for dozens of local authorities and rural councils that had long been defunct because of the violence.[236]

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[235] Asoka Gunawardena and Weligamage D. Lakshman, "Challenges of Moving into a Devolved Polity in Sri Lanka," in *Foundations for Local Governance: Decentralization in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Fumihiko Saitō, (Heidelberg: Physica Springer, 2008), 118.
[236] Jane's Defence, "Internal Affairs, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment— South Asia*, 27 April 2011.

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Since the civil war concluded, the number of military checkpoints has dropped precipitously. A state of emergency rule remains in effect, however, and the Sri Lankan Army continues to operate some checkpoints—especially near camps for internally displaced persons as well as near military facilities and other potential high-profile targets.[237, 238] While permanent stations have dissipated, roving checkpoints have increased throughout the north and east, and in Colombo.[239]

© Sarvodaya Shramadana / flickr.com
Military police

It has been reported that security forces have harassed Tamil citizens at these checkpoints.

In addition to the government's checkpoints, the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), the breakaway LTTE faction that sided with the government in the closing days of the war, has established checkpoints in the east, using them as a tool to harass those not supporting their organization.[240]

If stopped at one of these checkpoints, comply with instructions from security forces. You will likely be expected to present identification and submit to an inspection of your vehicle and personal belongings.[241]

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[237] South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), "Sri Lanka: 2011 Dawns with Killings and Abductions," 4 January 2011, http://www.safhr.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=257:sri-lanka-2011-dawns-with-killings-and-abductions&catid=154:sri-lanka-news&Itemid=614

[238] Lionel Beehner, "Sri Lanka: Checkpoints in Paradise," *New York Times*, 10 March 2010, http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/travel/14next.html

[239] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U. S. Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Report: Sri Lanka," 8 April 2011, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/sca/154486.htm

[240] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U. S. Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Report: Sri Lanka," 8 April 2011, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/sca/154486.htm

[241] Bureau of Consular Affairs, U. S. Department of State, "Sri Lanka: Country Specific Information," 12 April 2011, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1025.html

Landmines

The northern area of Sri Lanka is riddled with landmines and unexploded ordnance. Although a signatory to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), Sri Lanka has not signed the Mine Ban Treaty. During the civil war, both sides used landmines. The bulk of the government's weapons are Pakistani-, Chinese-, or Western-manufactured bounding and fragmentation devices. The LTTE, on the other hand, manufactured many of its weapons, reverse-engineering models they acquired as part of their arms trafficking activities.[242]

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
Minefield near Kilinochchi

Exchange 25: Is this area mined?

Visitor:	Is this area mined?	inda pagudiyil kanni vedigal irrukkiratha?
Local:	Yes.	aamaam.

While government forces were careful to record the locations of their landmines, the LTTE took no such precautions, littering the countryside with the deadly devices in the wake of their hasty retreat during the war's closing days in 2009. Weapons were left in homes, along roads, in farm fields, and anywhere the LTTE thought government troops might pass. The government has committed to demining operations and hopes to have all mines removed by 2020.[243]

In the meantime, tens of thousands of Tamil IDPs are pouring back into these northern areas, hoping to return to their homes and lives that were left behind during the war. Many have been injured by mines in the process. The allure of high-paying jobs clearing the mines has attracted a wide range of applicants, including farm wives, who hope to supplement their family's income while making their communities safer. [244] Estimates place the total number of mines at 1 million or more.

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[242] "Sri Lanka: Mine Ban Policy," *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*, 18 October 2010, http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/373

[243] Vidya Abhayagunawardena, "Sri Lanka Works Toward a Mine-Free Nation," *Journal of ERW and Mine Action* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2011), http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/15.1/notes/vidya/vidya.htm

[244] Agence France-Presse, "Sri Lanka: Women Clear Landmines," *Asia Pacific Defense Forum*, 1 April 2011, http://apdforum.com/en_GB/article/rmiap/articles/print/departments/across_asia/2011/04/01/feature-04

Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Since the conclusion of the civil war, the Sri Lankan government has focused resources on the redevelopment and resettling of the north and east.
   TRUE
   As part of resettlement programs, the government has been repairing roads and other infrastructure in the north and east of the country, a necessity for the revival of the economy in those areas.

2. The government-run system provides quality healthcare to the Tamil-majority areas.
   FALSE
   Though the government offers free healthcare to all citizens, the sparsely populated Tamil regions suffer from a lack of facilities and healthcare providers.

3. The quality and availability of rural education was severely hampered by the civil war.
   TRUE
   As with most institutions in the Tamil areas of the island, the education system was profoundly impacted by the civil war. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam regularly abducted children from schools to forcibly serve in the terrorist organization.

4. The governance of rural areas in Sri Lanka has been decentralized.
   TRUE
   The 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution decentralized the government in rural areas by replacing district councils with *Pradeshiya Sabha*, essentially village councils.

5. Landmines are not a safety concern in rural areas.
   FALSE
   The northern area of Sri Lanka is riddled with landmines and unexploded ordnance. During the civil war, both sides used landmines.

Chapter 6 Family Life

Typical Household and Family Structure

Most Tamil families live in small homes composed of cinderblocks or adobe. Asbestos also remains a common building material.[245] Homes in the cities are typically roofed in half-round, red clay tiles (a remnant of Portuguese colonial influence) while thatched roofs are more frequent in villages.[246, 247] Families frequently build their homes over a long period of time, living in the home while adding living space as need arises and money permits.[248]

Nuclear families have become more commonplace among the Tamils of Sri Lanka, but the extended family remains an important element of their society. Joint families are also quite common because adult children are expected to care for their elderly parents. Even families with separate households tend to live near one another.[249]

Families are patriarchal; however, women wield some degree of influence within their households. Though they are expected to care for their homes, women are free to pursue outside work and social interactions.[250]

© Markus Spring / flickr.com
Family near Navalady

The traditional practice of marriage between two relatives remains common, mostly in rural areas. The practice aids families in keeping property and wealth within the family.[251] In Tamil culture, these arranged marriages are typically between cousins from parental siblings or are uncle-niece relationships, wherein a woman may marry her maternal uncle. This is a common practice among the various Dravidian peoples of South Asia.[252]

Children inherit private property from their parents. It is most commonly passed on to sons. In areas not affected by the war, there is a growing trend toward liquidating property assets;

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[245] Tatiana Nenova, "Expanding Housing Finance to the Underserved in South Asia: Market Review and Forward Agenda" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010), 14.

[246] Charles A. Gunawardena, *Encyclopedia of Sri Lanka* (Elgin, IL: New Dawn Press, 2005), 292.

[247] M. Dinesh Kumar, *Water Management in India: What Works, What Doesn't* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2009), 35.

[248] CultureGrams World Edition, "Sri Lanka: Housing," 6 Jul 2011, http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world_country_sections.php?contid=3&wmn=Asia&cid=151&cn=Sri_Lanka&sname=Housing&snid=27

[249] CultureGrams World Edition, "Sri Lanka: Family," 6 Jul 2011, http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world_country_sections.php?contid=3&wmn=Asia&cid=151&cn=Sri_Lanka&sname=Family&snid=11

[250] Joke Schrijvers, "Womanhood and the Tamil Refugee," in *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 529.

[251] Russell R. Ross and Andrea Matles Savada, *Sri Lanka: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988), 86–87.

[252] EveryCulture, "Tamil–Kinship," n.d., http://www.everyculture.com/South-Asia/Tamil-Kinship.html

however, families are less likely to do so with agricultural real estate.[253] Naturally, such issues are complicated in those areas ravaged by the civil war because ownership of property has become difficult to prove, with many Tamil families displaced and Sinhalese and others having moved into abandoned properties.[254]

Status of Women, Elders, and Adolescents and Children

Women

Traditionally, Tamil society emphasized women's roles as chaste wives and loving mothers. But during the civil war, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) altered traditional discourses on Tamil womanhood. With the dramatic and often traumatic shifts in demographics and living circumstances, the LTTE found itself short of men under arms. Accordingly, through propaganda and indoctrination, the LTTE stressed the need for women to serve as armed cadres and valorized the reproductive role of women, encouraging them to produce needed future warriors. Thus, premarital relationships, frowned upon by traditional Tamil values, were no longer stigmatized. The survival of the LTTE and the Tamil community trumped all previous notions of propriety. A similar loosening of social mores existed in the IDP and refugee camps, where women frequently traded sex for protection or survival.[255]

© trokilinochchi / flickr.com
Tamil women near Kilinochchi

It remains to be seen if all this will have any lasting effect in defining women and their roles in the postwar era.

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[253] Bambi L. Chapin and Kalinga Tudor Silva, "Sri Lanka: Land Tenure and Property," EveryCulture, 2011, http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Sri-Lanka.html
[254] Jane's Defence, "Executive Summary, Sri Lanka," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—South Asia*, 21 April 2011.
[255] Joke Schrijvers, "Womanhood and the Tamil Refugee," in *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 527–531.

Elders

Traditionally, younger family members afforded their elders respect and frequently sought their guidance and insight. Before the civil war, elderly parents could be fairly certain that they would be cared for by their children; however, many Tamil elders now must fend for themselves as they return home.[256] Extended families that would have provided care and familial positions of reverence have been shattered. Many Tamils who fled the

© Markus Spring / flickr.com
Elderly couple of Kalmunai

violence and are living abroad have opted not to return.[257] Others displaced by the conflict have relocated to Colombo or other cities outside the historically Tamil-majority areas. Aid agencies report that the Tamil elderly feel abandoned and struggle with finding their place in a society so radically altered by conflict and displacement.[258]

Children and Adolescents

Tamil children are frequently pampered by their parents. Mothers will carry their babies until they are able to walk. Most mothers breastfeed their children for at least the first year. As children grow older, they assume greater responsibility in the home, and parents use discipline, including corporal punishment, to foster appropriate behavior.[259]

© trokilinochchi / flickr.com
Children near Kilinochchi

The LTTE abducted and forced children to serve in its cadres. Sources indicate that 40%–60% of all LTTE fatalities during the 1990s were child soldiers under the age of 18. Parents were told that it was the obligation of all Tamil families to provide a child for the cause. These children were told that if they did not comply, the terrorists would take one of their siblings or parents instead or inflict harm upon their family.[260, 261] An obvious byproduct of the insecurity created by this predicament, coupled with the destruction of school buildings and the dearth of teachers, has been the inadequate education of Tamil children during the last three decades.

Although Western-style dating is uncommon among Tamil youth, adolescents socialize at school and during extracurricular activities. In Colombo and Kandy, they sometimes act much like their

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[256] Prakash Shah, *Legal Pluralism in Conflict: Coping with Cultural Diversity Law* (London: Glass House Press, 2005), 144.

[257] International Crisis Group, "The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora After the LTTE: Executive Summary," 23 February 2010, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/186%20The%20Sri%20Lankan%20Tamil%20Diaspora%20after%20the%20LTTE.pdf

[258] Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), "Sri Lanka: Older Returnees Face Isolation, Poverty," 30 March 2011, http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=92319

[259] Bambi L. Chapin and Kalinga Tudor Silva, "Sri Lanka: Socialization," EveryCulture, 2011, http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Sri-Lanka.html

[260] Jo Becker, "Chapter 7: Child Recruitment in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Nepal," in *Child Soldiers in the Age of Fractured States*, eds. Scott Gates and Simon Reich (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 110–112.

[261] Jo Becker et al., *Sri Lanka: Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Western counterparts: hanging out at the mall, cruising, and interacting in groups, often without their parents' knowledge or consent.[262] But this more liberal behavior is atypical in the Tamil-majority areas of the north and east.

Married Life, Divorce, and Birth

Married Life

Tamil family structures in Sri Lanka are markedly patriarchal and patrilineal, a distinct feature among other Dravidian cultures of South Asia. Customarily, these structures assign women less status than either men or boys. Therefore, a woman spends her entire life in a subservient position to her father, husband, and sons.[263]

© Indi Samarajiva / flickr.com
Tamil wedding couple

A newlywed couple typically moves to the husband's village and may live in the same home as his parents, at least for a few years.[264] This arrangement can be beneficial to all involved. The newlyweds can establish themselves financially without the burden of paying for a home. The wife might more easily work outside the home because the grandparents or other family members can provide free childcare. The elderly family members are provided for by the working members of the household.[265, 266]

Though many Tamil families experience a rewarding and loving family life, domestic violence is a social problem experienced by many.[267] In some instances, the abusers are the woman's in-laws rather than her husband. To compound the problem, a woman's original family might abuse her if she were to seek legal redress of the situation, because they would view this as bringing discredit on the family for their role in arranging or agreeing to the marriage.[268]

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[262] CultureGrams World Edition, "Sri Lanka: Housing," 6 Jul 2011, http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world_country_sections.php?contid=3&wmn=Asia&cid=151&cn=Sri_Lanka&sname=Dating_and_Marriage&snid=12

[263] Robin Mason et al., "'Violence Is an International Language': Tamil Women's Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence," *Violence Against Women* 14 (2008): 1397–1412. http://vaw.sagepub.com/content/14/12/1397.full.pdf+html , doi: 10.1177/1077801208325096

[264] EveryCulture, "Countries and their Cultures: Tamils," 2011, http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Rwanda-to-Syria/Tamils.html

[265] Stanley N. Kurtz, *All the Mothers are One: Hindu India and the Cultural Reshaping of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 260–261.

[266] Bruce Caldwell, *Marriage in Sri Lanka: A Century of Change* (New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corp., 1999), 219.

[267] Claudia Catani et al., "Family Violence, War, and Natural Disasters: A Study of the Effect of Extreme Stress on Children's Mental Health in Sri Lanka," *BMC Psychiatry* 8, no. 33 (2008), http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-244X-8-33.pdf , doi:10.1186/1471-244X-8-33

[268] Robin Mason et al., "'Violence Is an International Language': Tamil Women's Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence," *Violence Against Women* 14 (2008): 1405, http://vaw.sagepub.com/content/14/12/1397.full.pdf+html , doi: 10.1177/1077801208325096

Divorce

Legal divorce is easily obtained in Sri Lanka although it is still frowned upon by society. Throughout South Asia, a stigma remains associated with separation or divorce, and women typically bear the brunt of that stigma. Just as marriage represents the union of not only two people but two families, often from a particular community, divorce represents more than the dissolution of the relationship between husband and wife. It is viewed as a severing of communal ties and a rejection of societal norms.[269] Sri Lanka's divorce rate, although miniscule by Western standards, has climbed in the last few decades.[270, 271]

Birth

Tamils perform ceremonies to celebrate the life of a child, including its birth, naming, and first solid food. As with marriages, these rituals are held at auspicious times established by an astrologer. Though adherents of different religions perform the rituals in distinct ways, most Sri Lankan ceremonies are accompanied by freshly-picked and strung flowers, and a celebratory feast.[272]

© Jaroslav Mrkvicka / flickr.com
Baby with young ladies

The time of birth determines one's horoscope and astrological categorization as *deva* (godly), *manushya* (human), or *rakshasa* (demonic). These categories define one's basic nature and marital compatibility.[273]

Childbirth is seen ritually as a polluting event, so the mother and baby are believed to be in danger from evil entities. Thus, babies typically wear a protective amulet. On the 11th day following its birth, Tamil parents believe that the pollution is over, and name their baby.[274]

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[269] Robin Mason et al, "'Violence Is an International Language': Tamil Women's Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence," *Violence Against Women* 14 (2008): 1405, http://vaw.sagepub.com/content/14/12/1397.full.pdf+html , doi: 10.1177/1077801208325096

[270] Weraduwage I. De Silva, "Family Transition in South Asia: Determinants and Implications" (paper, Population Association of America, 2005 Annual Meeting, Princeton University, 31 March–2 April 2005), 4.

[271] Melvin Ally, "Sri Lanka's Household War—The Increasing Divorce Rates in Sri Lanka," *Vikalpa*, 6 September 2007, http://vikalpa.org/?p=147

[272] CultureGrams World Edition, "Sri Lanka: Housing," 6 Jul 2011, http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world_country_sections.php?contid=3&wmn=Asia&cid=151&cn=Sri_Lanka&sname=Life_Cycle&snid=28

[273] Dennis M. Harness, *The Nakshatras: The Lunar Mansions of Vedic Astrology* (Delhi: Motilal Banardsidass, 2000), 121–122.

[274] Gavin Flood, "Hinduism," in *Rites of Passage*, eds. Jean Holm and John Bowker (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1994), 74.

Family Events and Rites of Passage

Most Tamils coordinate special events around astrological projections that determine the most auspicious dates and times for such occasions. Hindu astrologers, typically of the Brahmin caste, also use the horoscopes of prospective couples to determine the likelihood of a good marriage. Thus, it is best to know the exact time, location, and other minutiae of one's birth, because this is one of the major criteria used in horoscope readings.[275, 276, 277]

Rites of Passage

The first menses and the ceremonies surrounding it serve as a Tamil girl's rite of passage. Although typically informed by her mother or other female relatives and friends as to what she should expect, the onset of menstruation can be daunting. According to tradition, the girl must inform an elder female at the first appearance of menstrual blood, but she cannot approach her mother first.[278]

© Jason Turgeon / flickr.com
Coming of Age

The occasion is accompanied by a 7-day ritual, during which the girl is secluded in her room. Special foods are prepared for her. Relatives provide her with gifts. She is garbed in clean clothing each day, and the *tilak*, a small colored mark symbolizing spiritual enlightenment, is placed upon her forehead.[279, 280]

At the end of the seventh day, the home is ritually cleaned and purified. In the days that follow (varying with caste and local traditions), a gathering of family and friends celebrates the girl's new status as a young woman.[281]

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[275] Swarna Wickremeratne, *Buddha in Sri Lanka: Remembered Yesterdays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 32–33.

[276] Editors of Hinduism Today, *What is Hinduism? Modern Adventures into a Profound Global Faith* (Kapaa, HI: Himalayan Academy, 2007), 177.

[277] Deegalle Mahinda, *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 52–53.

[278] Deborah Winslow, "Rituals of First Menstruation in Sri Lanka," *Man* 15, no. 4 (December 1980), 603–625.

[279] Deborah Winslow, "Rituals of First Menstruation in Sri Lanka," *Man* 15, no. 4 (December 1980), 603–625.

[280] Sakthi Foundation, "Flowering of Girl to Women-hood (First Menstruation's Seven Days Ritual)," n.d., http://clinic.sakthifoundation.org/first-menses.php

[281] Sakthi Foundation, "Flowering of Girl to Women-hood (First Menstruation's Seven Days Ritual)," n.d., http://clinic.sakthifoundation.org/first-menses.php

Wedding

More and more people are choosing their own mate in
Sri Lanka today, especially in urban areas, but arranged
marriages remain common. A woman's sexual purity is
an essential part of the marriage contract. Though
marriage between members of different ethnic groups
has traditionally been discouraged, intermarriage
between Tamils and Sinhalese has been tolerated for
centuries. The longevity and commonness of this
practice illustrate the importance that Tamils place on building unions between families, since
weddings are perceived to bind more than two individuals.[282, 283, 284]

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LTTE marriage

In the past, many rural marriages were never solemnized. The man and woman merely began
living together, based on prior agreement between families. This tradition, once common among
the Tamils of the north and east, had declined prior to the civil war but seems to have reemerged
during the conflict.[285]

Hindu sacred scriptures, local customs, and caste govern the rituals and pageantry of Tamil
weddings. Such rituals are intended to demonstrate the reciprocal and harmonious nature of the
couple. In the final days before the wedding, the groom's parents have a gold coin melted and
fashioned by a goldsmith into a pendant, called a *thali,* which is worn by the bride during the
ceremony.[286]

The wedding begins with the arrival of the groom's party. The bride's family welcomes them to
the wedding hall with gifts, sweets, and flowers. They then enter the hall and proceed to an
elaborately decorated platform upon which the ceremony will be conducted. The ceremony
begins with prayers to Ganesha, the Hindu elephant-headed god of wealth.[287] During the
ceremony, the bride's father hands his daughter to the groom. Many other ritual acts occur
throughout the lengthy ceremony, culminating in the tying of a saffron thread joining the couple
and a walk around the sacred fire.[288]

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[282] CultureGrams World Edition, "Sri Lanka: Housing," 6 Jul 2011,
http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world_country_sections.php?contid=3&wmn=Asia&cid=151&cn=Sri_Lanka
&sname=Dating_and_Marriage&snid=12

[283] Arjun Guneratene, "What's in a Name? Aryans and Dravidians in the Making of Sri Lankan Identities," in *The
Hybrid Island: Culture Crossings and the Invention of Identity in Sri Lanka*, ed. Nekula Silva (London: Zed Books,
2002), 24.

[284] Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake, "Identity on the Borderline: Modernity, New Ethnicities, and the Unmaking of
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Research Centre, 2001), 110.

[287] Joe Cummings, *Sri Lanka* (London: Lonely Planet, 2006), 42.

[288] Gopal K. Bhargava and Shankarlal C. Bhatt, *Land and People of Indian States and Union Territories* (New
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The importance of marriage in Tamil and greater Sri Lankan society was illustrated in June 2010, when government authorities organized a mass wedding at one of its detention facilities for former LTTE rebels. The ceremony wedded 52 Tamil couples, Hindu and Catholic, symbolically binding their new lives as couples with their new start as members of a postwar society.[289]

Naming Conventions

Surnames are foreign to Tamil naming conventions.[290] Thus, Tamils tend to eschew full names for initials for all but their given name. Thus, if a man named Rajan has two sons named Selladurai and Ketesh, their names would be rendered:

parent's name ➜ given name[291]

Rajan   Selladurai

Rajan   Ketesh

The brothers would abbreviate their names as R. Selladurai and R. Ketesh.

The Tamils of Sri Lanka differ from their Indian relations in that they typically do not use the ancestral village as one of their names, but this is not universally true.[292]

In some instances, the names of multiple generations may be used for composing the name of a younger family member. Thus, if a man named Muthiah has a son named Naganathan, who has a son named Markandan, who has a son with the given name of Alakaiah, the youngest man's name would be rendered as Muthiah Naganathan Markandan Alakaiah. He would then likely shorten it to M.N.M. Alakaiah.[293]

Typically, a Tamil woman will replace the patrimonial name with her husband's given name when they wed.[294]

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Three generations

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[289] Ponniah Manikavasagam, "Wedding Bells for Sri Lankan ex-Rebels," *Asia Calling*, 19 June 2010, http://www.asiacalling.org/en/news/sri-lanka/1468-wedding-bell-rings-for-106-sri-lankan-ex-rebels

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Chapter 6 Assessment

1. The traditional practice of marriage between two relatives remains common, mostly in rural areas.
   TRUE
   In Tamil culture, these arranged marriages are typically between first cousins from parental siblings or are uncle-niece relationships, wherein a woman may marry her maternal uncle. The practice helps keep property and wealth within the family.

2. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) strictly punished sexual relations outside of marriage.
   FALSE
   The LTTE encouraged premarital relationships to produce the future warriors necessary for the movement. Frowned upon by traditional Tamil values, premarital relationships were no longer stigmatized by the LTTE during the civil-war era.

3. Although Tamil society has long respected and revered the elderly, today many elderly are abandoned and isolated.
   TRUE
   Many Tamil elders must fend for themselves as they return home. Extended families that would have provided care and reverence have been shattered by the long civil war.

4. Tamil weddings are simple affairs with little ritual or ceremony.
   FALSE
   Although in the past many rural marriages were not solemnized, today most Tamil weddings include elaborate rituals and ceremonies that were once reserved for the more prominent members of Tamil society.

5. Tamil naming conventions are essentially the same as those in most Western countries.
   FALSE
   Surnames are foreign to Tamil naming conventions. Thus, Tamils tend to eschew full names for initials for all but their given name.

Final Assessment

1. During the Sri Lankan civil war, nearly one-third of the area of the country came under the control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). **True or False?**

2. Kilinochchi, which served as the administrative center for the LTTE throughout most of the civil war, is one of the largest cities in the country. **True or False?**

3. Thanks to its relative isolation from the rest of South Asia, Sri Lanka was not colonized by the European powers until the British arrived in the late 18th century. **True or False?**

4. The Sri Lankan government has a mixed record on media freedom. **True or False?**

5. The Moors, an ethnic group made of the various Muslim elements in Sri Lankan society, typically speak Tamil. **True or False?**

6. The majority of Tamils are Roman Catholics. **True or False?**

7. Religion plays a significant role in the governance of Sri Lanka. **True or False?**

8. In response to the success of early Christian missionaries from Portugal, the king of Jaffna ordered the slaughter of several thousand Tamils who had converted to Catholicism. **True or False?**

9. Hoping to attract tourists, the Sita Eliya Temple was built in the late 1990s. **True or False?**

10. The Sinhalese majority are predominantly Buddhists. **True or False?**

11. Tamils and Westerners share the same concept of time. **True or False?**

12. The concept of personal space varies drastically among Tamils, depending on the context. **True or False?**

13. When giving gifts, it is important that one refrain from items colored black or white. **True or False?**

14. Unlike most South Asian cuisine, Tamil cooks use few spices, and their food is considered more palatable to the Western diner. **True or False?**

15. Heroes' Day, 27 November, is a nationwide holiday commemorating the Sri Lankan troops who died while serving in World War II. **True or False?**

16. Most of the population of the Tamil areas is highly urbanized. **True or False?**

17. Urban life in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka has returned to its pre-war norm. **True or False?**

18. Malaria is a serious health threat in north Sri Lanka. **True or False?**

19. A great deal of importance is placed on standardized examinations in the Sri Lankan education system. **True or False?**

20. Pedestrians have no difficulty traversing the streets of Sri Lanka as they go about their business. **True or False?**

21. More than half of Sri Lanka's area is agricultural land. **True or False?**

22. Self-poisoning is a major health concern in rural Sri Lanka. **True or False?**

23. Daily life in rural Sri Lanka is centered around government-run factories. **True or False?**

24. Although the civil war has concluded, government security forces continue to operate checkpoints in the Tamil-majority areas of the island. **True or False?**

25. Most workers on tea plantations in Sri Lanka are Tamil. **True or False?**

26. Extended and joint families continue to be a common feature of Tamil society in Sri Lanka. **True or False?**

27. Domestic violence is a concern in the Tamil community. **True or False?**

28. Tamil parents tend to pamper their young children, who are expected to assume greater levels of responsibility within the family as they grow older. **True or False?**

29. Sri Lanka has a low divorce rate because only Muslims are permitted to legally divorce. **True or False?**

30. People in Tamil territory may be considered incompatible for marriage because of the timing of their births. **True or False?**

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