



# **Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees In India: An Unending Humanitarian Challenge**

**Ms. Sreeja.G**

Assistant Professor

Department of History and Political Science  
Sree Sankara College, Kalady

&

**Ms. Sunila S Nair**

Post Graduate Student

Department of English  
Sree Sankara College, Kalady

## **Abstract**

The fear of persecution, physical harm or death from the warring parties, combined with insecurity owing to conflict forced Sri Lankan Tamil to leave their homes from 1970s to 2000s to India, a closet neighbour. Principally, the civil war between Sri Lankan security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) impelled the Sri Lankan Tamil to seek refuge in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. From around three lakhs refugees at one point of time, currently more than 52,000 Tamil refugees live in camps spread all over Tamil Nadu. Although Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are entitled to liberal welfare schemes of Tamil Nadu government and work permits, prolonged life in the camps does not lead to resilience and empowerment, and these refugees consider themselves in limbo, belonging neither to Sri Lanka nor to India and unable to get on with their lives. Elder Tamil refugees eager to return - wish to be disassociated with the label of 'refugee', while younger generation feel desire to settle in India or move to abroad as it would improve quality of life for them. On the whole, there are two sustainable options available to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India: repatriation or local integration. Resettlement option is the preferred one but the existing divisions and resentment between the two main ethnic communities and perceived anti-Tamil prejudice of Sinhalese leaders are obstacle in repatriation or return to their home. Other options is get citizenship and settle down in India, which some refugees wish to take it up but given the absence of official mechanism will force them to live further in appalling and subhuman condition as refugees. This paper examines issues related to Sri Lankan Tamils refugees in India and the humanitarian dilemma faced by them. The aim is to contribute to the understanding of how Sri Lankan Tamil refugees coping with post-war Sri Lanka and options available before them.

**Keywords:** Refugees, Sri Lanka, Tamil, India, Tamil Nadu

## Introduction

Based upon classical work ‘Mahavamsa,’ Great Chronicle, an epic in Pali language the earliest historical account of Sri Lanka dates back to 5th Century BCE, when Sinhalese, Indo Aryan race and largest ethnic group of Sri Lanka, had said to have been arrived from India,<sup>1</sup> the history of Sri Lanka is known. Later around 3rd Century BCE during the Chola period in India, Tamils of a Dravidian race moved to Sri Lanka as traders and invaders, however Sri Lankan Tamil historians dispute this claiming they are one settled before Sinhalese arrival. Over the following centuries the Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils were said to have contested for the domination of the island nation affairs.

Sri Lanka marked its beginning of colonial legacy by the coming of Portuguese in 1505, then by Dutch in 1658, and finally became a British colony in 1815. In fact, British legacy over Sri Lanka continued till 1948 when it became independent. The post colonial Sri Lanka revealed a land of tension with many large and small ethnic groups which possess different culture, language and religion. As per the 1981 census, ethnic composition of the Sri Lankan population is Sinhalese – 74%, Sri Lankan Tamils – 12.6%, Sri Lankan Moors- 7%, and Indian Tamils-5.6%.<sup>2</sup> The majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils had a conflictual relationship over the northern part of the country where the Tamil ethnic group resided. This has resulted in a series of ethnic wars between the two groups. These ethnic conflicts and internal tensions within the country forced minority Tamils to flee from their homeland and became asylum seekers and refugees in different nations. As India being the closest neighbouring country, it became the nation that has the highest number of Tamil refugees.

### *Who is a Refugee?*

As per the definition of UNHCR, a refugee is any person who “ owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his(or her) nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail him(or her) self of protection of the country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his(or her) former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>3</sup>

And as per the African Union Refugee Definition (1969) and Article I of African Union Protocol that “For the purpose of this convention, the term ‘refugee’ shall mean every person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail him(or her) self of protection of the country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his(or her) former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>4</sup>

The term “refugee” also applies to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place or habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Rawat, “Civil War in Sri Lanka,” The News letter, No: 59, Spring 2012. Retrieved from IIAS\_NL\_59\_1415.pdf, p14

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sri-Lanka/Plant-and-animal-life#ref24281>

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee>

<sup>4</sup> *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.* Retrieved from 36400-treaty-oau\_convention\_governing\_the\_specific\_aspects\_of\_refugee\_problem\_in\_africa\_e.pdf, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> ibid, p. 2

The 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention was the first international agreement on refugees that also includes freedom of religion and movement, the right to work, education and accessibility to travel documents. Though it was initially structured for European refugees in the aftermath of the Second World War, the conference has later expanded the scope to a broader sense by 1967 protocol as the problem of displaced people everywhere in the world was looming and to accommodate them. Many countries became a signatory of the convention and protocol and rectified too. But India being one of the few liberal democracies has not signed the UN refugee convention and 1967 protocol. However, India admits a large number of refugees from the region and provides asylum for them even though the country doesn't have any domestic refugee law or national protection framework.

### From Political Contestation to Armed Conflict

The colonial period in Sri Lanka had polarised the society into Sinhalese and Tamils and made them conscious about their distinct identity. There are two groups of Tamils in Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils. The former Sri Lankan Tamils as called are early settlers like Sinhalese who have historical claims of native. While the latter group, Indian Tamils or Plantation Tamils, who are approximately a million, were brought by British in the 19th century from India to work on the plantation sector in the central part of Sri Lanka.

The British in order to avoid any risk of giving too much power to the already majority Sinhalese placed Tamils in better administrative positions. Sinhalese who focused on agriculture profession were out of the higher educational facilities that were established by the missionaries in Jaffna peninsula. The good education provided the Sri Lankan Tamils to get better jobs. This made Sinhalese feel that minority Tamils were given power and privileges at the time of independence, hence soon after independence, nationalist Sinhalese tried to make things in favour of them through various laws.

#### *Factors contributed to the Civil War*

The Sinhalese dominated government adopted a series of 'discriminatory' laws against the Tamils. They passed the Ceylon Citizenship Act in 1948, which disenfranchised Indian Tamils and dropped the Tamil voting power from 33% to 20% in the Parliament. As per the Act only 5000 Indian Tamils were granted citizenship and more than 7, 00,000 Indian Tamils were denied citizenship.

Then in 1956, the "Sinhala only Language Act" was passed, which made Sinhalese the official language of the nation and subsequently, the Constitution of 1972 gave Buddhism a superior status, worsening the communal or ethnic relationship. The policies of preference that the Sri Lankan government adopted in order to assist Sinhalese community in areas of education and public employment, effected middle class Tamil youth, who found it difficult to enter university or secure employment. These discriminatory laws against the Tamil ethnic group can be viewed as starting a conflict in the nation. The discriminated young Tamils turn to arms with the lack of confidence on moderate leaders of their community and democratic means. In 1972 a group of young Tamils established a group called Tamil New Tigers and later transformed to The Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with Velupillai Prabhakaran as its political and military leader, and A.S.Balasingham as its ideological spokesman. Other major Tamil militant groups are Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), and Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS). In 1976 main Tamil party, Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) called for an independent Tamil state "Eelam", which was supported by many Tamil groups including Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which systematically eliminated all other similar groups in the long run. This along with the surface of armed Tamil militant groups led to armed conflict, which are discussed in four phases.

### *Eelam War –I (1983-1987)*

After local ethnic confrontation, the armed war broke out at Jaffna Peninsula in 1983, when LTTE took the life of 13 soldiers, which made Sinhalese to retaliate against Tamil civilians and between 2500 to 3000 Tamils lost their lives and forced many to flee to Tamil dominated area.<sup>6</sup> Fifty three Tamil prisoners were killed under questionable circumstances at the Welikade Prison outside Colombo. The Tamil Tigers declared the First Eelam war (1983-1987) with the aim of creating a separate Tamil state in north Sri Lanka called 'Eelam'. Over the years violence escalated when LTTE used car bombs, suitcase bombs and land miners against Sinhalese military and civilians. The Sri Lankan army responded by torturing and disappearing Tamil youths. In 1987 India sent a Peacekeeping Force of one lakh troops to quell the conflict, but miserably failed, and began fighting with Tamil Tigers. The Tigers sent female suicide bombers and child soldiers against Indian soldiers. Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, forced Indian government to recall its peacekeepers in 1990. The following year LTTE was held responsible for killing Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, and Sri Lankan President Premadasa in 1993.

### *Eelam War II (1990-1994)*

After the withdrawal of Indian peacekeeping force, matters worsened, and soon the second Eelam war erupted. It began when LTTE killed 600 surrendered police officers in eastern province on June 11, 1990.<sup>7</sup> This provoked the Sri Lankan government, and announced war on LTTE. The government cut off all medicine and food to Tamil dominated area of Jaffna peninsula, and started aerial bombardment.<sup>8</sup> Tigers in return massacred hundreds of Sinhalese and Muslim villagers. Thus both LTTE and Sri Lankan government engaged in gross human rights violation by killing civilians, innocent children and youth whom they suspect as supporters of LTTE or Sri Lankan force. The government also massacred Sinhalese school children in Sooriyakanda and buried the bodies in a mass grave, because the town was a base for the Sinhala splinter group known as the JVP. In 1991, Tamil Tigers surrounded the government army base camp at Elephant pass. The pass is a bottleneck leading to the Jaffna Peninsula, a key strategic point in the region. In the war between Tamil tigers and Lankan army about 2000 lost their lives on both sides. The government could not capture Jaffna itself despite repeated assaults in 1992-93

### *Eelam War II (1995-2002)*

After a short span of peace, 3<sup>rd</sup> Eelam war began when LTTE sank two Navy boats violating peace negotiation between LTTE and Sri Lankan government. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Eelam war the government declared "war for peace" and launched a massive military campaign that retook Jaffna peninsula. Some 350,000 Tamil refugees and Tiger guerrillas had to flee to Vanni region of Northern Province. LTTE responded with a wide spread attack on government, army and Sinhala civilian targets. There was a series of bomb attacks in the capital city of Colombo and southern cities in late 1990. LTTE hit the Central Bank in Colombo, the Sri Lankan World Trade Centre, and the Temple of Tooth in Kandy. In February 2002 MOU was signed for a permanent ceasefire agreement between LTTE and government with Norway as mediator. But a year later LTTE withdrew from the talk and declared having control of the north and east region of the country.

### *Final Eelam War (2006-2009)*

The final phase of military conflict started when the LTTE blocked the Mavil Aru anicut, which led the Government to use force to open the channel, with air force bombing LTTE camps around Mavil Aru anicut on 29th July 2006. Massacres against civilians on both sides left thousands dead over the next few years. The army could drive the Tamil Tigers from the key coastal city of Sampur. With the failure of Geneva Peace talks, the Rajapaksa government launched a massive military onslaught against the LTTE strongholds of north and eastern parts of Sri Lanka to crush LTTE once and for all. As war continued

<sup>6</sup> Kallie Szezepanski, *The Sri Lankan Civil War*, July 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-sri-lankan-civil-war-195086>

<sup>7</sup> ibid.

<sup>8</sup> ibid.

thousands of Tamil civilians got killed by both sides. In 2009 according to UN about 1200 Tamils were killed each month.<sup>9</sup> In May 2009 the government declared victory over LTTE by killing the LTTE leader Prabaharan, thus bringing an end to a 26 year long insurgency. The UN estimated that during the final days of the war around 40000 Tamil civilians got killed, and about 1 lakh killed during the course of war.<sup>10</sup>

## Forced migration: Key Factors

Throughout the course of civil war, both the Sri Lankan state and LTTE were held responsible for gross human rights violations. A 2011 report by UN Secretary-General Panel of Experts detailed credible allegations that both Sri Lankan armed force and the LTTE perpetrated serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, some of which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Report identified as many as 40,000 civilian deaths, mostly from indiscriminate government shelling. Sri Lankan government committed war crimes by bombing civilian targets, usage of heavy weaponry, shelling of hospitals, denial of humanitarian assistance, forced disappearance and abduction of Tamils, sexual violence, etc.<sup>11</sup> The atrocities committed against the Tamils during the three decade long war in Sri Lanka amounted to ethnic cleansing. On the other hand LTTE was responsible for killing civilians through suicide attack, forced recruitment of children as child soldiers, using civilians as human buffers and killing civilians attempting to flee LTTE control.<sup>12</sup>

The fear of persecution, physical harm or death from the warring parties, combined with insecurity owing to conflict forced Sri Lankan Tamils to leave their home from the 1970s to 2009 to India, which is their closest neighbour. The Sri Lankan Tamils sought refuge in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu while some rich well to do ones went to western nations like Canada and Australia.

## Flow of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees to India

First wave of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees to India happened during Eelam war I (1983-87). About 1, 34,053 Sri Lankan Tamils came to the state of Tamil Nadu.<sup>13</sup> After repatriation in 1987, there were about 34,429 refugees in temporary camps in Tamil Nadu.<sup>14</sup> Second massive flow of Tamil refugees happened during the Eelam war II as about 1, 22,078 came to the state of Tamil Nadu and about 243 camps were opened.<sup>15</sup> Tamil Nadu government reduced the existing camp to 132 in 1993 following Rajiv Gandhi assassination. Later 54,188 refugees were repatriated to Sri Lanka by Indian government and 75,587 repatriated by their own to Sri Lanka.<sup>16</sup> During the Eelam War III, 22,418 Tamil refugees came to India by the end of 2003.<sup>17</sup> And during the final phase of war about 24,512 Sri Lankan Tamils took refuge in India.<sup>17</sup> According to Ministry of Prison Reforms, Rehabilitation, Resettlement, and Hindu religious affair in Sri Lanka only 4,691 persons repatriated to Sri Lanka between 2011 and 2016.<sup>18</sup> Thus, at present about 52,000 Tamil refugees live in 107 camps spread throughout the state of Tamil Nadu and about 34,684 Tamil refugees live outside the camp.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A, Rawat, "Civil War in Sri Lanka," The News letter, No: 59, Spring 2012. Retrieved from IIAS\_NL\_59\_1415.pdf, p15

<sup>10</sup> Kallie Szezepanski, n. 6.

<sup>11</sup> A Rawat, n. 9, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> A Rawat, n. 9.

<sup>13</sup> C, Valatheeswaran & S, Irudaya Rajan, *Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India: Rehabilitation Mechanism, Livelihood Strategies, and Lasting Solutions.* Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237101012.Sri\\_Lankan\\_Tamil\\_Refugee\\_inIndia\\_Rehabilitation\\_Mechanism\\_Livelihood\\_Strategies\\_and\\_p\\_30](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237101012.Sri_Lankan_Tamil_Refugee_inIndia_Rehabilitation_Mechanism_Livelihood_Strategies_and_p_30)

<sup>14</sup> ibid, p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> ibid, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> ibid, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> ibid, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> M George, Anita Vallan Court, & S. Rajan, "Conceptual Framework of Repatriation Success," *Refugee*, Vol. 32, No. 3, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> "Why Home's a Distant Dream For Lankan Tamils in India," *Times of India*, September 2020, Retrieved from <https://m.timesofindia.com/india/why-homes-a-distant-dream-for-lankan-tamil-in-india/articleshow/77668108.cms>

### *Arrival and Procedure in India*

Sri Lankan Tamils usually land at Dhanushkodi in Rameshwaram district of Tamil Nadu. The local police question them on arrival to ensure they are genuine refugees, who are affected by ethnic problems, and have they come to India to save their life. Then, even refugees are screened by 'Q' branch officers and Intelligence Bureau to segregate militants, if any. Militants, if any, are sent to jail or special camps. Once the refugees get registered in the refugees admission register, they get a refugee I.D card and then send to various refugee camps in Tamil Nadu.

### *India's Humanitarian Assistance*

Refugees mainly require material resources to meet their basic needs. They mainly depend upon local governments, NGOs and international agencies to get humanitarian assistance. The Sri Lankan Tamil camp refugees mainly get assistance from Tamil Nadu state government on humanitarian grounds. The state government provides refugees with 20 kg of ration rice per family and rupees 1000 per month for the head of the family, Rs 750 for adults and Rs 400 for children.<sup>20</sup>

Sri Lankan refugees also access free medical service from hospitals and can also claim financial assistance for major medical treatment from the state government. The state government also provides free educational facilities to children of Tamil refugees till 12<sup>th</sup> standard.<sup>21</sup> School going refugee children get free uniforms, mid day meal, bus pass, text books and note books, and free bye cycle for 11<sup>th</sup> standard students. Seats are also reserved for refugee children in higher education particularly in professional colleges and Universities like 20 seats for medical, 30 seats each for engineering and polytechnic courses and 7 seats for agriculture.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, the state government has adopted various schemes to promote the socio economic condition of refugees in camp. The state government has implemented an integrated child development scheme to enhance the nutrition level of children, pregnant women and lactating mothers in Tamil Nadu which has since 2007 been extended to female refugees and children staying in the camp.<sup>23</sup> The state government has also extended Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity assistance scheme to pregnant Sri Lankan female refugees in Tamil Nadu. In this scheme they get cash assistance of Rs 1000 per month for nutritional supplements during the 3 months before and after delivery.<sup>24</sup> Also Tamil Nadu government started the "Welfare of Sri Lankan Refugees" in 2007 in order to improve the standard of living in the camp and provided Rs 42.14 crore under this scheme.<sup>25</sup> Indian government has overall spent a sum of Rs 500 crore for Sri Lankan refugee relief programme during 1983-2009.<sup>26</sup> The entire expenditure was initially met by the Tamil Nadu government and reimbursed by Indian government later.

### **Plight of Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India**

The State government is providing the Tamil refugees with necessary basic facilities and many welfare schemes are implemented so as to emancipate their socio economic situation, but the question is 'is that enough' since their real problems and hardships are never addressed. They are:

#### *1. Statelessness*

Under India's Foreigners Act 1946, "refugee" is covered under "foreigners" and is used to cover aliens temporarily or permanently residing in the country. This places refugees in the broad category along with immigrants and tourists. India's Citizenship Amendment Act defines all non citizens who entered the

<sup>20</sup> "The ignored plight of Sri Lankan refugee in Tamil Nadu," *India Today*, Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/sri-lankan-refugees-tamil-nadu-plight-camps-war-13168-2016-06-09>

<sup>21</sup> ibid.

<sup>22</sup> C., Valatheeswaran & S, Irudaya Rajan, n. 13, p 34.

<sup>23</sup> ibid, p 33

<sup>24</sup> ibid, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> ibid, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> ibid, p. 34.

country without visa as illegal migrants with no exception for refugees or asylum seekers. So refugees are treated as aliens or illegal immigrants and not entitled to become citizens. The refugees consider themselves in limbo, belonging neither to Sri Lanka nor to India. This situation of statelessness and the label of "refugee" is the real problem that each Sri Lankan refugee faces

## *2. Poor housing facilities*

Refugee camps have very poor housing facilities. Population in most refugee settlements has grown, but there is no provision for an increase in housing, so the whole family of four or six has to stay in a house which is roughly of size of 10 x10 widths. Hence, very little living space inside the house and no privacy. Moreover shelters are made of leaves, asbestos, tarpaulin sheets or iron sheets. Living under sheets during the summer season is very harsh and can create health problems.

## *3. Poor sanitation.*

Poor sanitation is another major problem in camp. There is no proper toilet facility as they have to share a common bathroom and toilet and sometimes are forced to use open toilets in the vicinity of the camp. Flowing waste water, dirty septic tanks and sewage overflow inside the camp leading to terrible stench. There is always a chance for the spread of communicable diseases.

## *4. Lesser job opportunities*

Finding employment is very difficult for the refugees, even if they are educated and qualified as they do not have proper documentation. Since non citizens cannot get a government job or even a private sector job. There is growing frustration among refugee youths, who are unable to attend government and private sector job interviews because they do not own a passport. Most of the refugees work in unorganised sectors. They are mostly engaged in casual labour jobs such as construction work, and agricultural related works. Refugees are unable to find a regular employment and don't have any job securities

## *5. Surveillance and travel restrictions*

It is a jail like situation for Tamil refugees as they have travel restrictions. They cannot travel outside the state of Tamil Nadu. They even require permission to travel outside the district. Most of the refugees who are daily wage earners have to return by 6 in the evening. They are 24x7 constant police surveillance and interrogation. The relatively free atmosphere in the camp changed with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

## *6. Adequate Shelter*

Rain and drought is still a problem in refugee camps as rain means flooded pathways in many camps and drought means water shortage and walking miles to fetch water.

## *7. Lack of Proper Documentation*

Not being citizens they cannot get marriage or birth registered, The government prevents them from acquiring valuables worth more than Rs 2 lakh.

## *8. Feeling of discrimination*

Most of the refugees have to live in the shadow of fear, insecurity and in constant surveillance. Feeling of discrimination and denial of basic human rights is strong among the refugees. They are denied a dignified human existence.

## **Repatriation and Challenges ahead**

The only two possible solutions for the unending crisis of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India is repatriation or local integration. There is a difference of view between the older generation who wish to repatriate to Sri Lanka, and the younger generation who have been here for about 30 years, finds it difficult to go back to a nation which they have never known. So they prefer to stay back in India and try to secure Indian Citizenship. But Indian Government has refused to give a permanent resident status or citizenship to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, including refugee children who were born in India, mainly because the Indian government expected Tamil refugees to repatriate to Sri Lanka as civil war is over. Most of the Sri Lankan Tamils wish to repatriate when conditions improve there and reasons for their departure has been solved.

But Tamil refugees express anxiety over many issues like having a home, livelihood, access to land, education, health care facilities, infrastructural development, lack of knowledge regarding Sinhalese language and most importantly getting physical security when returning to Sri Lanka. Thus the decision regarding whether to return and when to return depends upon many factors.

#### *1. Access to land and property.*

Sri Lankan government had acquired most of the land and houses of Tamils during the civil war, with no intention of returning back to its original owners. As Sri Lankan refugees have no longer property, home or land in Sri Lanka, have concern about returning to homeland. Many of the refugees who have repatriated and those internally displaced due to struggle have difficulty of reclaiming their land from armed forces. So they have a fear of moving from Indian camp to Sri Lanka,

#### *2. Education*

Many of the Sri Lankan Tamils want their children's education to be finished in India, as they feel education in Sri Lanka may be discriminatory as it is compulsory to learn Sinhalese language. Moreover the accessibility of education in Sri Lanka is also unfavourable to them.

#### *3. Livelihood*

Refugees who are self employed and have become self reliant and earn a livelihood in India fear returning to Sri Lanka, as there is no certainty of livelihood there. Tamil refugees identified lack of livelihood options such as housing, education, health and employment as the major challenges they may face in Sri Lanka. Farming and fishing would be the main sources of employment income for Tamils who repatriated to Sri Lanka. But after the civil war Sri Lanka has limited infrastructures such as machines, seeds or money for these industries. So, the initial support package should be given to the repatriate by the Sri Lankan government.

Apart from livelihoods and education, lack of proper health care facilities is a major problem that the repatriate face. Sri Lankan civil war has destroyed many hospitals and public health centres. Tamil majority areas like Jaffna and Killinochchi lack proper health care facilities.

#### *4. Inadequate repatriation package*

Compared to the welfare schemes and support availability to refugees living in Indian camps, Tamil repatriates in Sri Lanka receive minimum support from the Sri Lankan government. Repatriation package offered by the Sri Lankan government to them is far inadequate for developing a sustained economic activity. The resources available to Tamil refugees from Sri Lankan government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee is a combined 10,000 Rupees in the form of onetime payment, as well as six month supply of clothing and food, which is inadequate for starting up a livelihood.

Moreover when compared to the cities in Tamil Nadu, where the camps are located, both north and east of Sri Lanka, places where refugees hail from are backward.

#### *5. Fear of security and discrimination.*

Refugees also fear of discrimination at the hands of Sinhala government and people. And they fear of being treated with some amount of suspension, and hence fear of safety and security.

#### *6. Security of women*

Victimisation of Tamil women is also a major worry of refugees as there is a lot of assault against women happening in Sri Lanka. They fear there is no security, safety or protection of women.

#### *7. Frequent Policy change of Sri Lankan governments*

Refugees in the camp had expected progress on the question of rehabilitation of the displaced and the Tamil refugees when the new government took office in Sri Lanka during 2015. The Sri Lankan leadership, both President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremasinghe, said that they intended to settle the issue of the Tamil political right and a proper resettlement of both internally displaced Tamils and refugees. But with Sri Lanka re-electing Gotabaya Rajapaksa as President, any hope for progress on the question of rehabilitation and the political right of Tamils remains a dream. It has cast a shadow on the Tamil refugees.

in India who have been dreaming to go back to their homeland as it was in the former Rajapaksa government that gross human rights violations took place against Sri Lankan Tamils. Since the change of government, there have been huge military and police presence in Tamil dominated areas of Jaffna, which has created a matter of concern and worry among the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Tamil refugees in the camps of Tamil Nadu.

## Conclusion

While crossing the high tides of Indian Ocean and landing in India, despite the sorrow of leaving their birth land their driving force was a better tomorrow, a tomorrow without gun sounds, and bloodshed. But their unending humanitarian crisis continues. They are still stateless and continue to be labelled as illegal migrants, aliens, or refugees. It is high time that Indian government should take a favourable attitude to the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, by granting citizenship to those who wish to continue in India as Indian citizens and thereby providing a dignified human existence.

On the other hand it is the responsibility of the Sri Lankan government to encourage those willing to settle in their homeland in Sri Lanka. They should be resettled in their original place and their property, homes and land, occupied by the military should be given back. To ensure proper repatriation government should set up industries in the war affected area to ensure job facilities. Proper repatriation packages should be provided so that they can rebuild their life. The government should provide the returnees security, physical and legal protection. Sri Lankan government should provide equal rights to Tamils with that of Sinhalese, thereby eliminating any kind of discrimination.

But unfortunately the Sri Lankan government is not taking much interest in rehabilitation of repatriated refugees or internally displaced Tamils. Still a large portion of Tamil population remains displaced and remains in camps. Enforced disappearance and torture of Tamils persist even now. Sri Lankan government surveillance and track people linked with LTTE. The government Prevention of Terrorism Act targets Tamils. So it is evident that on what ground the Sri Lankan Tamils had to flee their mother country, still exist without much change. Moreover the process of Sinhalisation is taking place in Sri Lanka where by Sinhalese culture is slowly replacing Tamil. Sinhalese monuments, road signs, streets and village names as well as Buddhist places of worship have become more common in Tamil areas. This is an effort to erase Tamil elements from the country's culture.

## References

C. Valatheeswaran & S, Irudaya Rajan, *Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India: Rehabilitation Mechanism, Livelihood Strategies, and Lasting Solutions*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237101012.Sri\\_Lankan\\_Tamil\\_Refugee\\_inIndia\\_Rehabilitation\\_Mechanism\\_Livelihood\\_Strategies\\_and\\_](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237101012.Sri_Lankan_Tamil_Refugee_inIndia_Rehabilitation_Mechanism_Livelihood_Strategies_and_)

*Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. Retrieved from [36400-treaty\\_-\\_oau\\_convention\\_governing\\_the\\_specific\\_aspects\\_of\\_refugee\\_problem\\_in\\_africa\\_e.pdf](36400-treaty_-_oau_convention_governing_the_specific_aspects_of_refugee_problem_in_africa_e.pdf)

Kallie Szezepanski, *The Sri Lankan Civil War*, July 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-sri-lankan-civil-war-195086>

A Rawat, *Civil War in Sri Lanka*, The News letter/No:59/Spring 2012. Retrieved from [IIAS\\_NL\\_59\\_1415.pdf](IIAS_NL_59_1415.pdf)

M George, Anita Vallan Court & S. Rajan, "Conceptual Framework of Repatriation Success," *Refugee*, Vol:32, No:3.

"Why Home's a Distant Dream for Lankan Tamils in India," *Times of India*, September 2020, retrieved from <https://m.timesofindia.com/india/why-homes-a-distant-dream-for-lankan-tamil-in-india/articleshow/77668108.cms>

“The ignored plight of Sri Lankan refugee in Tamil Nadu,” *India Today*, Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/sri-lankan-refugees-tamil-nadu-plight-camps-war-13168-2016-06-09>

“Sri Lanka Tamil Militant Groups,” country studies, retrieved from <http://countrystudies.us/sri-lanka/72htm>

*Refugee*, Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee>

African Union Refugee Definition/ Rights in Exile Programme. Retrieved from <https://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/african-union-refugee-definition>

“Atrocities against Lankan Tamils amounted to ethnic cleansing,” *Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/atrocities-against-lankan-tamils-amounted-to-ethnic-clinsing/1032657/>

Amaya Valcarcel Silvela, “Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India: return or integration?,” *Forced Migration Review*, retrieved from <https://www.fmreview.org/return/valcarcelsilvela>

Viziru Mirela Adriana, “The Sri Lankan Civil War: From Conflict to Peace Building,” *Global Journal of Human- Social Science*. Retrieved from 4-The-Sri-Lankan-Civil-War-From-Conflict.pdf

“The Sri Lankan Civil War and its History, Revisited in 2020.” Retrieved from <https://hir.harvard.edu/sri-lankan-civil-war/>

“Sri Lanka Marks 10 years Since Civil War’s End.” Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/sri-lanka-marks-10-years-civil-wars-end>

