



FRESNO PACIFIC  
UNIVERSITY

FPUScholarWorks

---

**A tale of two communities: a memoir on Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.**

Author(s): Ranjan George.

Source: *Pacific Journal* 15 (2020): 19-45.

Publisher: Fresno Pacific University.

Stable URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/11418/1319>

---

FPUScholarWorks is an online repository for creative and scholarly works and other resources created by members of the Fresno Pacific University community. FPUScholarWorks makes these resources freely available on the Web and assures their preservation for the future.

# A Tale of Two Communities: A Memoir on Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict

RANJAN GEORGE

Sri Lanka is a tiny island off the South Indian coast, situated along the strategic silk road sea route connecting the East and the West. The nation has a distinct and unique historical and cultural heritage with earliest documentation of Sinhalese tradition dating back to 543 B.C. More recent colonial history includes Portuguese, Dutch, and British rule from the year 1505 to independence in 1948. The British gave it the former name Ceylon, while Sri Lanka became the official name when the country became a republic in 1972. In the Sinhalese language, "Sri Lanka" means "The Resplendent Land". The nation has been referred to as the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean", partly because of the numerous precious stones and gems of the land. The nation's name has also been tarnished to be referred to as the "Peril of the Indian Ocean" due to decades-long violence and unrest. The famed hymnwriter and Bishop of Calcutta (now Kolkata) Reginald Heber, prophetically composed the beautiful hymn *From Greenland's Icy Mountains*, capturing Ceylon by name, in his second stanza, numerous decades before any conflict ever began in the island.

From Greenland's icy mountains,  
From India's coral strand,  
Where Afric's sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sand;  
From many an ancient river,  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain.  
What though the spicy breezes  
Blow soft on Ceylon's isle;  
Though every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile;  
In vain with lavish kindness  
The gifts of God are strown;  
The heathen, in his blindness,  
Bows down to wood and stone.

Sri Lanka is a multicultural society along ethno-linguistic and religious dimensions. With a total 2012 population of 21.4 million, the ethno-linguistic composition was as follows: the Sinhalese constituted 74.9% while Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamils of Indian Origin accounted for 15.27%. The Moors and Malays (Muslims) accounted for 9.52%. The Burghers, descendants of the Portuguese, Dutch, and British settlers accounted for 0.19% while other minorities accounted for 0.12%. Most of the Sinhalese are Buddhists while a small minority are Christians. Among the Tamils, the majority are Hindus and a minority are Christians. Muslims are followers of Islam and the Burghers are mostly Christians. The religious composition of Sri Lanka is as follows: Buddhists 70.1%; Hindu 12.58%; Islam 9.66%; Christian 7.62% and others 0.04%. Buddhism is the majority religion of the nation and the Constitution considers it to be the foremost while allowing other faiths to flourish. Each ethnic community cherishes its cultural identity and heritage. Some customs and rituals are common to both the Sinhalese and the Tamils. This article reflects the author's personal experience in the midst of conflict and violence covering the five-decade period 1958 to 2007 while living in both Sri Lanka and overseas. The narrative illustrates how conflict had emerged and spread from one location to another. It points out the futility of unresolved conflict fueled by inept political will and leadership. In addition, the narrative explains how unresolved violence can stifle an entire economy and tarnish democratic ideals and values. I spell out some of my life situations in minute and graphic detail to convey the intensity of my conflict experience while glossing over others in order to present the overall coverage of the time period as I connect incidents to the broader impact on life and society as a whole.

It was Saturday afternoon. My twin sister and I were on our August school holidays. That day Dad was working for Mr. Cassim on his part-time job in the *Pettah*.<sup>1</sup> We had just finished lunch and were waiting for Dad's arrival. The evening was free, and my plan was to sneak out of the back door to the neighboring Jayasundera family garden for a game of cricket. The sun was shining brightly with beautiful white clouds. It was the best way to spend my school vacation: building community with my neighbors and friends. There was Ajith, one of six siblings from the Wijethileke family and because he was the only son, he became a close friend of mine although he was a year older than me. Dhammika and Krishnan from the neighborhood mechanic garage would join

and make the game even more enjoyable. From the Jayasundera family, Uncle Gamini, tall and burly, the oldest in our group, would stop whatever he was doing and simply join us, clad just in his checked sarong. His strength was in bowling,<sup>2</sup> and I had to be over-alert not to let the ball hit the wickets.<sup>3</sup> We all played the role of umpire by simply shouting out “howzat” to one another as we simply could not afford to have one.<sup>4</sup>

To save time, I was not too concerned about parental permission. All I had to do was show up. It took me six seconds to bolt from our back door to the neighboring garden, which was a double L-shaped property. The large front open space was an ideal cricket ground. There were no glass windows in front of their house. Coconut and other trees dotted the garden space preventing the ball from going too far. On one end of the garden was an ornately decorated Buddha statue in a canopy tent, the shape of a little ‘house’. It stood firmly on a five-foot tall brick column and we decided to draw a red line across the column to signify the height and width of the wicket. Ajith made a strong, heavy cricket bat out of a plank of wood, that could last a long time. He painted it bright navy blue with a slanting red stripe in the middle. We drew a line on the dirt with this bat to mark the crease. The rubber balls were hidden behind the thorn bushes and anyone could grab them to use as needed.

There could possibly be only one minor, but important five-minute interruption. At precisely 6 p.m., Uncle Gamini’s mother would gently announce to all present at the playground: “*Aney Putha, pahana pattukananna!*” which meant, “Dear Son, light the lamp!”. At this point, I had to leave the vicinity as was required for any non-Buddhist. I had to respect their beliefs. During this time, I would simply walk into the house of the Wijethileke family and talk to Ajith’s mother, Amitha Aunty, and his sisters. She would be cooking in the kitchen, which was pitch black at the back of the house. The smell of food was intense and delicious. I had to avoid Raja Uncle, his Dad, because he would probably be drunk. If he wasn’t there, all was fine. By the time my round was over, the lamp-lighting would also be over and I could return to the game. I could see the lamp burning and smell the coconut oil and the game would resume.

While this was the plan, the reality was quite another. As the afternoon unfolded, Dad came home more than half an hour ahead of his routine arrival time. I wondered why this had happened and walked up to ask him. But before I could ask, he became a tyrant, demanding unquestioning and immediate

compliance with whatever he said. He spoke to my brother, “Christie, close all the windows!” Within the next minute, the entire household was plunged into darkness. I asked, “Why all this?” Mom took me to the side and tried to explain, “Listen, you cannot ask any of these questions. We are in trouble. Riots have broken out. Do not raise your voice. Don’t even talk, because we are going to be killed and we should show people outside we are not at home, understood?” A few minutes before Dad arrived, Mom’s dear friend, Mrs. Zilwa came rushing to us as she got off the bus and to tell us that a huge riot had broken out and that we would be attacked. She said she could not talk much, but that she would pray for us, then she vanished. I listened and watched closely to all these conversations as I climbed onto the armchair and held firmly onto the steel grill bars of our little hall window that opened out to the verandah.

### **Conflict**

This was how the August 1977 riots unfolded. The government had declared a curfew, and no one could leave home or travel. Transportation came to a standstill and we were glad Dad was home. Because we belonged to the Tamil community, our house was going to be attacked, looted, destroyed, and burned. Our family of six would most likely be killed. My twin sister and I were too young to understand and we were asked to be extremely quiet. Dad discussed with the four others what documents to take if we had to flee from home. We could not carry clothes, food, or bags. My elder sister suggested the citizenship certificate. “But where can we find it?” Dad asked. Attention turned to locating it in the darkness. I asked my sister, “What is a citizenship certificate?” She explained softly that it was a paper that gave you the right to live and vote in a country and that Dad had to have it. They finally found it. Dad was also the church treasurer at St. Mary and St. John’s Church, Nugegoda at that time. He had bundles of heavy five and ten cent copper coins as offertory from last Sunday’s services that he had to bank. He tied them up in handkerchiefs and rolled them underneath the beds to avoid being stolen or destroyed. I struggled to stay calm and quiet, knowing that this was the greatest help I could provide to my family. Yet, occasionally, I would dare to ask questions.

By this time, the nation’s security apparatus crumbled like a deck of cards. Dad listened to the news bulletin as he huddled near the transistor radio speaker to hear what was going on. The news reported that all was well, but it wasn’t.

Soon, we heard a mob of hundreds of people rushing to attack our home. Dad said to all of us, "The end, the end, the end, has come." We heard shouting and screaming as the mob came to attack us. Their plan was to break in, steal, and ransack, then burn our life and livelihood. One matchstick could have burned our home to a pile of ashes. We lived in a twin-house and if our home was torched, our neighbor's home would also be gone in a few minutes. I heard everything, but I could not understand anything. It was a nerve-wracking experience for my parents and siblings. We all thought that it was the end of our lives, our home, and our family.

Finally, there was silence, pin-drop silence. Minutes passed. We were speechless as we pulled ourselves up together. The afternoon that began as a symbol of glory had turned into one of gory. "Something has happened! But I am not sure what or how," Dad exclaimed, and his fear and torment were clearly visible. In the next few moments, Dad gained strength to assure us that we had escaped death and destruction. How this happened remains a mystery. With our remaining strength, we pulled ourselves up and groped our way around the house in the dark. There were some voices from outside the house. We decided that Dad would deal with all communication. He was told by some person that an army truck had scared the mob away but that they could come again because they had our address in their records. "Give me liquor, give me money, I will sit in front and look after your house," the voice said. Dad declined. "Did you know that little hut behind your house? They are making petrol bombs there and just one is enough. Think about it," the voice said.

Around this time, one strange man somehow got inside our home. He was surely one from the mob. He walked into our bedroom and began to talk as we watched him in bewilderment and fear. He was tough, rude, and outrageous and said, "I am a security guard at the (university) campus but have to ask you some tough questions. Have you ever been bitten by ants?" We stood in silence. He continued, "You see, when you are bitten by ants, you never attack the one that bit you, but the entire lot down there. And it is the same here also. You may not be the one directly responsible for this violence. But the entire lot of your people will be attacked. Did you know that we are the majority and you are the minority? Did you know that our people are being killed by your people and their bodies are being put into fish boxes?"

As my family looked at this man's face in utter horror, I began to realize something. This man's name was Dayaratne. I used to see him at Appuhamy and Cyril's bicycle shop next door to our home where the seventh milepost was. Many of the bicycle shop customers spoke to him and called him by his name and I suddenly remembered it. He was neatly dressed every day and rode his bicycle to work. I used to climb the mulberry tree in front of our house and devour the fruit. While I sat in the tree eating mulberries, I listened to the people talking below in the open-air bicycle shop. This man's face and voice were familiar. My guess was correct. It was indeed Dayaratne. In a rage, he banged his right fist into our only glass mirror hanging on the wall, covered in a cloth curtain. We heard the mirror shatter. Then he walked out.

When Dayaratne was out of sight, we came back to clear the passage of the glass debris in total darkness. To our amazement, miraculously, the glass had not shattered at all. It had withstood all that force. We could not believe our eyes. We touched it, felt it, and there was not even one crack. However, the evening became intense. It was dangerous to hide at home. We had to leave but where could we go and how could we move out? The hustle and bustle of the Saturday afternoon became a pin-drop silence. We had to do something. Dad slowly went through the back door to our immediate neighbor, the Moone-singhe family. Uncle Shelly agreed to provide shelter. His house was tiny, the same size as ours. Dad decided to stay back, while we moved over for the night. The night passed without further event.

The next day dawned and there was no untoward violence. The day passed but late the next night, we saw a house across the street being attacked and set on fire. It was a Cadjan hut.<sup>5</sup> Dad said, "It is the Raju family home. I know the man. They are not a wealthy family but very hardworking." They had a poultry farm and we could hear the chickens and hens running helter-skelter and later, all of them were slaughtered by the mob. Cadjan is highly inflammable and with the darkness of the night approaching, I once again took my place on the armchair and held on to the window grills to witness the horror and carnage of the violence. The family had probably escaped, and we hoped they were safe, but the flames leapt about a hundred feet into the sky, then two hundred feet, and finally three hundred. The wind blew the smoke and debris into our house. This was my first-ever experience of conflict and violence. The night was quiet

although extremely tense. The violence had spread across the island nation, bringing it to a complete standstill.

Around this time, my parents called me aside and began to explain the violence as best they could, what it meant for me and how I had to deal with it. This was clearly becoming a new normal for my life. It was also a moment of truth as a nine-year-old fourth grader in school. They gave me a succinct and brief history lesson. “This all began about ten years before you were born, and people refer to it as the 1958 riots. Your brother was one year old, and I was five months pregnant with your sister.” It began with the Sinhala letter “*Shri*”, representing the name of the country, written as ශ්‍රී. A law was passed to make Sinhalese the state language and all license plates of all vehicles had to bear the letter ශ්‍රී in addition to numerals. Previously, the license plates all had English letters and numerals. When the first vehicles reached Tamil-dominated areas, the local Tamil people protested by pouring asphalt and tar on these vehicles. In retaliation, shops and homes were attacked and burned and members of both ethnic groups were attacked and killed. I asked my Mom if I could still play cricket with Ajith. She explained to me that Ajith was Sinhalese and I was Tamil and that my community was being attacked. I could not step out of our home. She added that Ajith could still play cricket as much or as long as he wanted, and he would not be harmed in any way. This was when I understood that the Sinhalese and Tamils were two distinct ethnic groups. Every Sri Lankan is conscious of this to this day and conflict has consistently and continuously polarized differences.

Up to this point, I had not known any difference between the two ethnic groups, although they spoke two different languages. I had more Sinhalese friends than Tamils. I tried to relate it to my school setting at Saint Thomas College, in the beach resort suburb of Mount Lavinia, which was the most prestigious private Anglican missionary boys’ school of the country. I knew that we were a minority, but we were not in any way mistreated or underestimated. We had students from all communities and we had a harmonious relationship. This short description instantly changed my perception of the nation. My parents encouraged me to speak and act as if I was a Sinhalese. I could speak Sinhalese fluently and they encouraged me to become even more proficient. That was the best I could do to protect myself, even though my name could betray my identity. Later, we came to know that the August 1977 riots broke out after a

few police officers forced their way into a carnival celebration in the northern part of the country where the Tamils lived in large numbers. When stopped by the organizers, they began an altercation that led to a fight. The police officers opened fire supposedly killing four people and in retaliation, riots and violence spread to the rest of the country.

By dawn the next day, Dad had made plans to evacuate with some of the most important things. He packed several suitcases. Some of these, we would hide in neighbors' homes for safekeeping. We would take some clothes with us in a small bag. But where could we go? Around this time, Father Godwin, Vicar of the Church of St. Mary and St. John came in search of us, inquiring about our safety and welfare. We were relieved to hear his voice at the front door. He held Dad's hands as they clasped each other. The need for a *modus operandi* was apparent and urgent. Plans were being laid out speedily and secretly with clockwork precision. The first step was to move some of the valuables in suitcases to neighbors' homes. Dad was almost finished—there was just one bag left and he was about to enter the back door of our neighbor—when an accident happened.

The low-level, rusted tin sheet roof at the back of the house cut his forehead. It left a gaping wound and blood was gushing. As I was whisked away to another location, I could hear Shelly Uncle shouting "Where's the ice? I want ice!" I knew that our home had the only refrigerator and we regularly supplied ice and ice water to the neighborhood. We had to open the house again. This is all I knew as I was asked to leave. I was given strict and specific instructions to carefully creep through the barbed wire fence of our garden, walk across the open land, then very discretely and watchfully, arrive at the Wijesinghe home through their back door. I was told not to talk to anyone and to make sure I was not seen by anyone on the street. This was not difficult and I quickly made it to the location. The Wijesinghe family was waiting for me and made sure I was safe. I walked through their home to their front door and Father Godwin whisked me away on his Yamaha motorcycle. I was told to cover my face against his cassock while he took me to an unknown destination. Later, I learned that it was Austin Uncle's place, another parishioner at our church who was Dad's very dear friend. Austin Uncle and Sybil Aunty welcomed me. I was the first to arrive. Within the next half hour, all my family arrived from different

hiding places. Finally, Dad also arrived after receiving medical attention. His bleeding had stopped, although he was somewhat in a state of shock.

We were in hiding in Austin Uncle's palatial house annex. I was told to stay inside and away from the windows. They provided us with food and took good care of us. Soon however, another fear became real. We were told that mobs would attack anyone providing care and protection to Tamils even if they were not Tamils. Food was sold in small quantities and buying more food could expose Austin Uncle to the danger of being attacked. The violence, however, soon died down and it was time to get back to normal life. We left Austin Uncle's home forever grateful for his Good Samaritan role. I returned to school and found that many of my friends had a similar experience. It was clear that our family had just experienced a providential and miraculous escape from the jaws of death. Many Tamils began leaving the country that they loved and called home. The first ones to leave were those who were skilled in a profession or had a relative overseas. The affluent and the influential left next. In my school, if you saw a box of chocolate cake coming out of a car, unless it was his birthday, you would bet that it was his last day at school. People left their culture and legacy and language behind to carve out a future of their own in the Western world.

From the end of 1977, the nation plunged into a new state of disorder and disharmony. The 1977 General Election results were ethnically polarized. This polarization resulted in the appointment of a Tamil politician as the nation's opposition minister. His political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), advocated secession as a means to achieving freedom for their people. This political development was also one of the reasons for the flare up of conflict and violence in the country. The differences between the communities became more pronounced and polarized. The society witnessed a more vocal and open expression of hatred and distrust. It was a new normal of violence, conflict, bloodshed, and destruction of a once harmonious setting. For example, one day, I saw Raja Uncle walking around the neighborhood. I knew that he was drunk and tried to avoid him. He shouted angrily at me, "The next time Tamil riots come, I will have all you Tamil bastards killed!" We had to accept this sentiment as part of the normal routines of life.

My parents would discuss the question, "What shall we do now?" One possibility was to move to the Colombo city limits. Home prices were prohibitively

expensive although they were much safer neighborhoods. Another option was to leave everything and move to India and seek help from Dad's brothers in starting life all over again. During this time, we decided to move to another part of the Nugegoda town. It was a much better location and we began to enjoy our new home. After a few months, we began renovations and extensions to build more rooms for greater comfort.

Time ticked by and many years followed. There was no apparent sign of any more direct or indirect ethnic violence on the scale that we had seen. Human nature leads us to complacency in our comfort. That was true for us. The nation, however, was sliding into an unprecedented decline. No one thought it could happen, but the next two decades witnessed a complete rewrite of history beyond anyone's wildest imagination. It was the ugly head of terrorism that would raise its head and stifle the nation's economy, divide communities, and lead to the loss of tens of thousands of lives. In 1981, Her Excellency Queen Elizabeth II visited Sri Lanka to commemorate the celebration of fifty years of universal adult franchise. It was a grand and colorful ceremony marked with pageantry and pomp to build diplomacy with the western world and also to cover up some of the past political blunders. During this time, there were widespread rumors that ethnic violence would flare up after the end of her official visit. There was greater and greater disenchantment among the Tamils. In the early 1980s, a new wave of violence began. There were attacks on police stations in the northern and eastern parts of the island where Tamils lived in large numbers. Banks and financial institutions were robbed in broad daylight. Law and order began to crumble at an unimaginable speed. A terrorist and freedom-fighting group identifying themselves as the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged.

## **Violence**

In 1983, I was in tenth grade. It was an important year for me because of the national General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination. December was examination month, the highlight of my student life as it paved the way for high school and university education prospects. We had to put in extra hours of study to earn high grades while practicing past question papers in order to face the challenge and rigor of this examination. All through that year, violence and rumors of violence spread and in July all hell broke loose. It

began when an army convoy with thirteen soldiers from the Sri Lankan armed forces were ambushed and killed in an explosion and gun battle with the LTTE terrorists. The funerals of these personnel were conducted with full military honors in the city of Colombo. As the funerals were concluding, uncontrollable violence broke out in retaliation against Tamil people throughout the country. All reputable private business establishments in the city owned by Tamil businessmen, along with companies, factories, and movie theatres that had a Tamil name or evidence of ownership were burned. The following day, Monday July 25, homes of the Tamil people were attacked. It was one of the darkest days in the nation's history. People still identify this event in Sinhalese as *Kalu Julie* or Black July. On that day, unbeknownst, we all went to school. I was in my class and it appeared to be a normal day. The first few periods went as scheduled, but around 11:00 a.m., they closed the school and told students to leave for home because the situation was becoming uncontrollable and unpredictable. We were told that Tamils were being attacked and killed, and that their properties were being destroyed in all parts of the country. The school could not guarantee the safety of any students because anyone harboring or protecting Tamils would also be attacked. It was clearly a well-orchestrated, government-sponsored program, a genocide, and a systematic annihilation of the Tamil race.

By midday, the police and security forces were on the streets and were granted the power to allow mobs of people to engage in arson, looting, destruction, and killing any identifiable Tamils. Electoral Registers from government records were used to identify Tamil residences. Telephone lines were cut off to prevent communication or requests for help. I was stuck in school. I knew that Dad had gone to work that day and that both my sisters went to school. My brother was planning to leave home early in the morning to work in the southern town of Matara, but miraculously, something happened, and he had remained at home with Mom. My friends and I were confused and so was everyone else. We had never experienced a disaster of this size and intensity. My close friend Chitran Duraisamy, a good Christian believer, decided to help us. He asked us to hand over our school bags, books, and belongings to him for safe keeping. He lived close to the campus and assured us that he would keep it safe.

More news about the disaster was spewing out. Tamils on the streets and on public transport were being questioned by mobs and attacked. Language proficiency tests were carried out on people on the streets to ensure that no Tamil

was spared from death. One such test was the “pen” test. When one member of the mob showed a pen to an individual and asked, “What is this?”, the person should pronounce the word for pen in Sinhalese with high proficiency. There is only a slight difference in the pronunciation of these two words and only a person proficient in both Sinhalese and Tamil would know this. Anyone could fail this test. This was the method the government-sponsored pogrom utilized and estimates indicate that between 300 to 4,000 people were killed, mostly stripped naked and burned, women raped, and men beaten to death.

I headed home around noon. The sun was shining, and it was a hot, humid day. As I left the school campus, chaos was everywhere. I could see thick black columns of smoke. Mobs were attacking homes. I could hear doors banging and glass crashing. I slowly walked onto Hotel Road, Mount Lavinia. I met my friend Naguleswaran who was wondering how to get home. His Dad was an eminent lawyer but could not call him because the phone lines were cut down. I asked him if he could give me a ride home. He said he would love to but he was looking for his Dad. We decided to jump through the boundary wall of the Sri Jinaratna Suwasevana Ashramaya Buddhist temple to avoid mobs on the street. While I was holding onto the wall, Naguleswaran accidentally stepped on my right palm and crushed my hand. It hurt, but I could not lose time. We cut through the temple campus and walked to our usual bus stop. I saw the route 183 bus approach. It was packed with people. All I had to do was board the bus and I could be home in twenty minutes, but I was reluctant to set foot on it. I could see a mob inside the bus and decided not to take it.

I began walking down the main Galle Road toward home. I met my friends, Sidath and Jeerasinghe, both senior to me by one year. I consider them to be the Thomian (an expression used to signify a student from Saint Thomas College) Good Samaritans. For many years, I traveled to and from school in Sidath’s Dad’s legendary green and black Morris 8 car. Sidath and Jeerey, as he was fondly called, volunteered to “look after” me until I got to my hometown, Nugegoda and I readily agreed. Jeyam, my classmate in the Tamil class, also joined me. Mrs. De Silva, our Sinhalese medium mathematics teacher, also joined us with her three sons.

We walked up to the famous Beach Road junction along Galle Road, and were met by the Chaplain, Father Sunil who was a loving man and one of our close family friends. He was traveling back on his Vespa scooter to the school

campus after meeting his parents who lived close to my home. He was shocked to see us on the streets. We asked him about the situation in Nugegoda and he did not hesitate, "Nugegoda is finished!" He tried to convince us walk back to school for our safety, but we decided to continue towards home, despite the mobs that were everywhere. Mrs. De Silva would cry out, "I am scared to death!" and we would encourage her. Our working rule was to cross the street to avoid the mob. We came up to the neighboring Dehiwala town and turned onto Hill Street. We went past another schoolmate's home who gave us drinking water. We witnessed destruction, fire, and smoke. It took me about two hours to get home. Jeyam continued on toward the Kotte area, while Sidath, Jeerasinghe, and Mrs. De Silva went to their homes from Nugegoda.

Our home was intact. The front section, which was under construction, was still standing. Mom and my brother were home. Both my sisters had arrived home, walking from their school. We were all safe and sound, but we had no news about Dad. I had just finished lunch, when I was told that a curfew would commence at 2 p.m. At 2 p.m. sharp, mobs began attacking the three homes in our neighborhood. Jothiratne, the chief mason in our house construction, yelled at me "*Mahaththaya, duwanne! duwanne!*" "Sir, Run! Run!" I ran for my life. We ran out our back door to the Berman family's home where they welcomed and hid us. My brother ran to the Peiris family home and he was asked to sit in their living room covering his face as if reading a newspaper. Our neighbor's home was being attacked. It was not clear what happened to our home.

Three houses were being attacked, looted, ransacked, destroyed, and then set ablaze. As the night fell, the noise of destruction was becoming deafeningly loud. The smell of burning asbestos made all our nostrils toxic. The Berman family decided to send the man of the house on a "spy mission" into the mob to overhear what could happen next. He would come near the back door of the house and slowly whisper words to his wife, Faith, from the bathroom fanlight. They were as scared as we were because Faith was a Tamil and her husband, Noel, was Burgher and they had little Naomi, their nine-month-old daughter. We learned that the mob's next move was to comb through all neighboring homes to make sure no one was in hiding. They were planning to kill all male members of Tamil families, including children and youth. We were worried about Dad who still had not shown up from work. During the "spy mission" Noel learned through a reliable friend that Dad was seen in his chauffeur-driv-

en office car on his way home and that he should be home by this time. Our fears intensified because Dad was not fluent in Sinhalese and could become an easy target. It was by far, the darkest night of my life.

When morning dawned, the sun was shining but the sky was black with smoke. We saw that the rear of our home was set on fire. The extent of the loss was unclear but nothing was left. Two other homes were destroyed, their livelihood, their savings, and what they had built over many decades. One family had a poultry farm and each chicken was slaughtered and killed. By this time, the government had set up refugee camps and we were asked to join the police escort to a nearby camp for our personal safety. The Berman family asked us to walk to the police van from our own home, because they feared reprisals for protecting our family. As we walked, we saw the fire and ashes. The tile roof was gone and hardly anything remained of our home sweet home. Some good neighbor had turned a water hose on the fire but the hose itself was almost burned to ashes. Both the garden coconut trees had been burned and the green tree stood ugly and brown. As I got into the van, the policeman asked me if there was anything left in our home. I remember saying "*Okkoma ivarai, Mahattaya!*" "Everything is finished, Sir!" He was extremely happy at the thought that this would bring the end to the Tamil people in the country. It was clear that he was looking forward to a "fairy tale" end in his country, when he could say that everyone lived happily ever after, but that was never the case.

We arrived at the local police station that was now declared a refugee camp. People were howling and screaming in grief and horror. Most had lost everything and came here with nothing. Columns of fire rose to the sky in all directions. We still had no news of Dad, although five of us were together. Uncle Lakshman, our church warden, was a senior police officer and came to see us. But there was a surprise! Behind him was Dad! He was smiling and said, "I am safe, don't worry about me!" We clung to him. One fear was erased from our heavy hearts. Dad's driver had been smart and made a U-turn to take him back to office where he stayed the night. He called Uncle Lakshman and somehow, miraculously, the telephone worked. We experienced, first-hand, the three dimensions of a refugee camp: desperation, destitution, and deprivation. We had no food, no clothing, and no shelter. We were lying on the grassland in the open. The Anglican church opened one of their cathedrals to house homeless

families. The next day, we moved to a bigger refugee camp. It was a miserable and unforgettable experience.

After several weeks, law and order returned. We came home and sifted through the debris. One room was completely torched with all the contents. There was a library of about fifty Bibles, including the big family Bible that my grandfather gifted to our family. Mom's wedding Sari was burned but the gold linings were still intact when we pulled them out of the ashes. An entire cabinet of crockery and tableware were destroyed. The ceramics withstood the fire but cracked on impact. We cleared the rubble and began life again. We rebuilt the walls and the roof, and, in a few weeks, life was as usual. I returned to school to find that our class of students had dropped to half the size. Many had to relocate or flee. Chitran, who lost his palatial home, returned all our books. His Dad was a senior executive of the nation's leading multinational company, Unilever, and his home was spectacular. It was burned repeatedly and nothing remained except the burned-out brick walls! As a safety precaution, his parents moved our schoolbooks to another neighbor's home that escaped the fire. We listened to each friend's stories. To our horror, we learned that another senior student, Thananjayan, had been killed by a mob. He was a soft-spoken and hardworking student. It was a tragic end to his life.

We had to prepare for the state examinations in December. We had barely three months left, so we worked hard. Many friends were leaving the country. Some western nations, notably Australia, Canada, and Europe, opened their doors to people who had lost their homes but had retained a decent financial investment, welcoming them as immigrants. The United States opened its doors to international students who would later remain to live and work. Hundreds of thousands of people lined the embassy for this opportunity of a lifetime. This began the massive "brain drain" that resulted in the loss of large numbers of highly skilled professionals in all fields. The nation had a black spot in history that no Sri Lankan would ever forget. With determination and hard work, I successfully completed the General Certificate of Education examination in December of 1983.

## **War**

I was a high school junior at this time and my Dad decided to send me and my two sisters to India to continue our education. His younger brother worked

as a Ports Officer in the Tuticorin Harbor, in the southern tip of Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Uncle David extended his family's apartment quarters to us. It was an humble and difficult beginning. We encountered a new culture, new accents and pronunciations to the languages we knew, and different customs. During the morning school assembly a student read the headlines of the daily newspaper. It was not the best way to start the school day. The war in Sri Lanka was often in the headlines as the nation confronted the latest form of unrest—terrorism. The struggle for liberation had become a war and the government branded the unrest terrorism and called the persons involved terrorists. Groups of young people were being trained in warfare in the predominantly Tamil areas in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. They came to be known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The government responded by enlisting hundreds of thousands of mostly Sinhalese youth from other areas of the country into the armed forces, encouraging them to engage in this patriotic endeavor to defeat the Tamil terrorists. Battle tanks, warships, warplanes, arms, and ammunition were being procured in an unprecedented manner to protect the nation's integrity and territorial sovereignty. Gradually, the northern part of the nation began to be severed from the rest of the country as the war against terrorism intensified. Banks were robbed. Police stations in the northern regions were being attacked. Civil service came to a complete standstill as the LTTE stepped up attacks to destabilize the northern and eastern provinces of the nation. In addition, there were sporadic attacks on innocent civilians in all parts of the country. The armed forces of the government also began attacking regions known to have been under LTTE-control in the north and these attacks brought more strife and misery. Schools, churches and places of worship, hospitals and public institutions were cluster-bombed and destroyed by government forces. Young men were rounded up and arbitrarily arrested, shot, and killed with news reports labeling them terrorists. Bombs began to explode and wrought death and destruction to people and property. This war would be the norm for many decades.

By this time, I was a freshman at Madras Christian College, in Madras (today Chennai). From there, I witnessed the war theatre in relative safety from a different country, but I also witnessed the violence when I returned home on vacation. One specific incident was the bombing of Sri Lanka's flag carrier Air Lanka flight UL 512 from London Gatwick to the Maldives. My sister and I

were on a different flight from India that same day, returning home for vacation and our one-hour flight was set for take-off. I could see the ground officers giving their “thumbs-up” for departure when suddenly, the airplane was asked to return to the terminal. All passengers disembarked and were told that the Colombo airport had been bombed. After a delay of several hours, our flight finally took off and we landed to see the horror of a Lockheed Tristar airplane that had exploded. The bomb was set to explode in mid-air *en route* to the destination. If that had happened, the destruction would have been catastrophic, leaving no trail of evidence. However, the plan went wrong when the flight was delayed because a truck accidentally hit the airplane on the ground. Twenty-one European tourists and several flight crew members lost their lives. This bombing brought the tourism sector to a complete standstill. Our flight was the first to land at the airport after the explosion. We saw the chaos and confusion firsthand, with corpses in body bags and hearses moving around the bombed airplane.

### **Separation**

In 1987, the Indian government extended a goodwill gesture for a peace deal by intervening to assist the government of Sri Lanka in achieving a lasting peaceful solution. The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord, as it was called, was signed by both heads of state, one being the famed Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Thousands of Indian armed forces personnel dubbed as the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) landed in the northern Sri Lankan airport of Palaly, bringing with them a full armor of battle tanks and fleets of aircraft to provide logistics support to the peacekeeping mission. Unfortunately, the peace mission failed and it led to a military confrontation between the Indian armed forces and the LTTE. Thousands of IPKF personnel were killed and maimed in the military operations that characterized a typical guerrilla war. The IPKF withdrew completely in 1990 after a failed operation in Sri Lanka. In 1991, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated during an election campaign in the state of Tamil Nadu in a suicide bomb explosion for which the LTTE was responsible. Within three days, the suspected accomplices of the assassination were arrested in India and remain imprisoned to this day. It was a huge political loss to India, the South Asian region, and the world as Rajiv Gandhi was the very last of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty at the helm of Indian rule.

In the early 1990s, the nation was reeling in the face of deadly terrorist attacks. The main rail network connecting the northern city of Jaffna to Colombo was bombed. The railway network transported goods and passengers to all parts of the country becoming the mainstay for the service. This destruction also prevented large numbers of armed forces personnel traveling to the war areas. The nation had almost completely been split into two parts and were referred to as the ‘uncleared areas’ in the north and east and ‘government-controlled areas’ in the southern and central parts of the nation. The electricity supply from the national grid was cut off, plunging the northern province into darkness for decades. The railway sleepers and girders were removed and used for constructing war-bunkers. Civil service and institutions came to a complete standstill. By this time, the government had recognized that this was a “war against terrorism.” In the same manner, hundreds of young men and women, including children and teenagers, were recruited into the LTTE. One of the most notable was the “black tiger” wing that carried out suicide bombings.

With a new government in office after the 1994 elections, the emphasis was on a military defeat of the LTTE terrorism. A massive war effort was initiated towards the end of 1995. I was in Sydney, Australia working on my Ph.D. program. My dissertation stage had arrived, and it was time to gather data from my sample of about 350 individuals in Sri Lanka. It was one of the most dangerous contexts to carry out a survey for a doctoral study program. I did not lose heart and prepared well. Two weeks before my scheduled arrival in Sri Lanka, the LTTE attacked the main oil refinery in Sri Lanka in the suburb of Sapugaskanda on the northern part of Colombo City, in an attempt to thwart the military offensive. BBC news reporter George Arney was asked to provide news coverage of the attack, while it was being launched, for the outside world. The entire oil refinery was destroyed as the nation came to a standstill. Thick black clouds of smoke covered the country for many days. My brother and his wife were expecting their second child and made plans to drive to the Lady Ridgeway Hospital for the delivery the day after this attack. Public transport and normal life stumbled and everyone stayed at home. The blaze was brought under control with the assistance of Indian experts after several days.

## **Alienation**

About two weeks after this attack, I arrived home in November 1995 for my dissertation data collection. My brother picked me up at the airport, the only gateway international terminal for the island nation. It was heavily fortified and protected as it was a suspected target for attack. All arriving passengers were taken by bus to a remote location where they were received by friends and relatives. I was in the van to go home and my excitement to be home was dampened by the fear on my brother's face. It was clear that he wanted to tell me something but was wondering how to say it. "Little brother, I have to tell you something. You must be intoxicated with great feelings about Australia, their liberty and lifestyle, but listen, things are very different here. Just be silent and watch what I do and what I say. Don't talk or be abrupt. Learn from how I act, and you will come to know the real situation." That was a tough lesson for me. When we came to the security checkpoint, we all had to get out while the armed forces personnel checked everything we had. They could ask us any question, do anything to us, arrest anyone without cause because emergency had been declared. I was trembling. We walked up to the counter for questioning. A soldier asked, "*Mahattaya, Demalada, Sinhhalada?*" meaning, "Sir, are you Tamil or Sinhalese?" My brother replied, "*Mahattaya, api Muslim,*" meaning, "Sir, we are Muslim." The answer came quickly, "*Hari, yanna,*" meaning, "OK, go!" We left immediately. A fake Muslim identity enabled us to evade the danger we faced because Muslims were not part of this conflict. The war against terrorism had alienated one community from the other. Every Tamil-speaking person was exposed to strict scrutiny and the fear psychosis was pervasive. I learned from my brother that I would have to be comfortable lying about my identity to be safe. It was an important lesson.

During my data collection, I traveled to numerous business organizations in the central business district to administer surveys. The survey took endless hours to work with respondents to gather quality responses. On one such occasion, I was in the town of Ja-Ela in the northern part of Colombo, and while I was talking with Sunesh, my respondent who was a factory manager in a plastics unit, his wife called on his cell phone and I could hear, "The Central Bank has been bombed! Turn the TV on and watch what's happening!" To our horror and disbelief, we could see that the central business district's boulevard had been truck-bombed. The reports said about one hundred people were killed and

several hundreds more injured. I returned home and wondered how my Ph.D. degree could see fruition. But with much determination and hard work, I completed the task. When I returned to Sydney the next year, my thesis supervisor and I jointly wrote an “inside story” article of my personal experience to be published in the leading scholarly management journal *Organization Studies*.<sup>6</sup>

## **Annihilation**

The war against terrorism was raging. Thousands of war casualties were reported from both sides of the battlefield. The war weighed heavily on the economy. New taxes, such as the national security levy, were imposed to raise funds for the war effort. Day and night, we heard constant ambulance sirens indicating that the war wounded were numerous. Our streets connected the nearby military airport to a hospital. The sirens were a symbol that there was no end to this needless and costly war. Communities were no longer just alienated, they were now being annihilated.

One Sunday morning, when my family had just returned home from church, we sat together in our hall. We noticed an unlikely visitor, a policeman, walking towards our front door. He walked into our home without permission and asked us rudely and bluntly, “*Ratey thathwaya dannawathe?*” meaning, “Do you know the country’s situation?” We dared not respond, wondering what was happening. We were confused, profoundly fearful because we could all be arrested. After a few minutes into the conversation and sharing who we were and how long we have lived in our residence and details of our workplaces, the policeman mellowed. We were very courteous to him and tried to persuade him to share with us the intention of his visit. The policeman admitted that while he did not have any real intention to harm or harass us, someone in the neighborhood could have complained out of a petty personal jealousy over our family. He had to exercise due diligence, especially in the country’s security situation.

While it was clear to us that someone had “sneaked us” to the police, we pooled our collective family wisdom to identify how this happened. Mom walked out our front gate to the road and was met by Mr. Perera, our neighbor for more than ten years. She asked him if she could chat for a few minutes and he stopped to listen. Mom told him that the police had come to our home out of suspicion and that we were not happy with the way we were treated. He responded bluntly, “You can never say, you know? These days are bad, Mrs.

George.” It was clear that he probably complained to the police out of jealousy. The nation was splitting, although we were living as one society. Mutual respect in the neighborhood turned into an atmosphere of suspicion, prompting neighbors to suspect even close friends from a different or minority community.

New emergency laws were passed. Regular residents and visitors to our home had to be registered with the local police station. A huge paper form had to be filled in with details, photographs, and reason for visit. It was called the police registration form. The form had to be signed and accepted by the police officer, then copies had to be kept in the possession of each individual resident, the visitor(s), and in our car. Non-compliance could mean immediate arrest. Whenever a bomb explosion took place, there would be a strong possibility of a midnight raid at our home. Several armed forces personnel would “comb” our entire home, inspecting anything they chose.

Another unforgettable bomb explosion was at the Nugegoda Bo Tree junction clothing store No Limit. This was a store that everyone visited. One evening, I was in a traffic jam on my way home from work. A truck had broken down in the middle of the main street. I took side roads and finally made it home. In a half an hour, we heard an explosion and it appeared to be close by our home. We saw the black smoke and heard the sirens. About twenty people, including school children perished when a terrorist left a bomb in the clothing store's parcel counter and vanished. The alert storekeeper became suspicious and called the army's bomb disposal squad but by the time they arrived, it had exploded. On our way to church the following Sunday morning, we experienced bumper-to-bumper traffic. The ten-minute journey took thirty minutes. We tried turning into byroads, but every street was blocked. We made it to the last block and saw the horror of the armed forces personnel stopping vehicles. They arrested entire Tamil families, including little children. We returned home. The armed forces had taken the law into their own hands and were inflicting atrocities and brutalities on people who had nothing to do with the bomb explosion.

In 2009, the war against terror was finally defeated militarily, costing the lives of about 30,000 people in the northern areas of the country where the armed forces indiscriminately attacked entire towns and villages in a massive offensive. The leader of the LTTE was shot and killed while being asked to surrender. The end of the war brought jubilation and high hopes of peace. There was an absence of war for the first time in about twenty-five years! It was a new

and welcome experience for everyone. The security news columns in newspapers, television stations and radio stations were slashed. The nation had a new beginning. Police registration forms and registration counters were closed. The people breathed a huge sigh of relief.

### **Reconciliation?**

Could reconciliation have ever happened in this conflict? There were numerous efforts. In 1985, the Indian government brokered a peace deal in Thimpu, Nepal, calling it the Thimpu Declaration. There was disagreement between the Government and the LTTE and the peace talks failed. The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord came next, again a dismal failure with thousands of Indian troops killed in the battle to usher in peace. The talks with the Government and the LTTE and the Indian Government also did not materialize. Liam Fox, the then British Member of Parliament brokered a bi-partisan Fox Peace Plan with the two major political parties in Sri Lanka that could not reach agreement.

In 2001, the LTTE began to respond to an offer of a peace deal brokered by Erik Solheim, the Norwegian Special Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Government of Sri Lanka. He was an exemplary goodwill ambassador and carried out numerous diplomacy visits to the war-torn and isolated northern areas of Sri Lanka. Several rounds of negotiations were carried out with ups and downs in the process and the land, for the first time in about thirty years, began to see some signs of hope towards achieving peace. A landmark and significant ceasefire was signed and came into effect. After a period of five years, the ceasefire agreement ceased to be in effect after lack of progress by both parties. All hopes of reconciliation ended in 2008 when the ceasefire was withdrawn, indicating a return to an all-out war until the war ended the following year.

### **Reflection**

Having witnessed so much and such intense conflict, I reflect on key thoughts as I end my memoir. These points could apply to any conflict in any part of the world. First, in any conflict, the first victim is truth. No one will ever realize or understand the true reason for thirty-plus years of violence. No one will ever accept their error of commission or omission. Each would most confidently and vehemently blame the other. Second, almost all the unfortunate victims

of the conflict have nothing to do with the perpetrators. Most were innocent, ordinary, and most likely, simple and poor people. The criminals and the violent will mostly walk free. Third, the greatest impact of the conflict will fall upon society's basic social unit, the family. These wounds will never be healed. There are thousands of female-headed households because of the death of the principal breadwinner in the war. This brings the untold misery of marginalization, poverty, and desperation which will never be known to the outside world. Fourth, no matter how brutal or atrocious violence has been, the victims continue to live in their land with even more determination and perseverance. The Tamils, in this case, are still very much a part of the nation's social fabric. They will continue to be, even after many decades. Fifth, conflict will cost the nation huge losses in the "brain-drain" of talented and skilled personnel, those who are most critical and necessary for economic development. In turn, the "brain-drain" has resulted in the "brain-gain" to Western and developed nations of the world. Sixth, the end of the war does not mean that peace has arrived. More than a decade has gone by with little or no policy change or political will to reconcile, restore, and rehabilitate the war regions although there has been some infrastructure development.

Seventh, the scars of conflict, violence, and war will remain always. It would require tremendous leadership and political will to heal the scars left by decades-long separation and alienation. I remember Dad quoting the words of the fourth Prime Minister of Ceylon, Hon. Solomon W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who was a distinguished old boy of my alma mater. In 1940, during a famous parliamentary debate, Bandaranaike stated, "Nothing will please me more than to see the last Indian [Tamil] leaving the shores of Ceylon."<sup>7</sup> No one expected the power these words would have after several decades. These sixteen words sowed the seeds of institutional and systemic racism that plagues the nation even today, even though there is no war.

Eighth, all societies and cultures, without exception, are unprepared to handle conflict. This goes whether countries are developing or developed, rich or poor. No one ever thinks about conflict in advance. People are aware of it only once it has flared up and in its full-blown form. By that time, it is too late and it leads to forceful and confrontational political approaches that aggravate higher and more complex forms of unrest. Ninth, conflict always starts with one tiny, trivial, and isolated incident. No one pays attention until it has snowballed out

of proportion and control. Tenth, and finally, in the height of a conflict, both sides in the theater of war display similar forms and levels of brutality and aggression toward each other, so much so that one could not identify who is doing what and for what purpose. One example is the Sri Lankan government's Office on Missing People. Tens of thousands of loved ones are submitting information and photographs of their sons, brothers or husbands who went missing during the war due to brutal killings of security forces.

You might ask me if I would have endorsed or supported the LTTE, at least ideologically being a Tamil myself. As a Tamil of Indian Origin, living in Sri Lanka, I disagreed with their cause and efforts even though they spoke my native language and shared my culture to some extent. As I have mentioned, I had to conceal my identity as a Tamil for my personal safety and security. Even if the LTTE had won their so called battles and wars, the victory would never have been significant, relevant, or meaningful to me and my family or community. If I were to have been asked to move to their so-called "Tamil-dominant" areas, I would have refused. The reason is that I would never have been accepted by their community and, at best, would be treated as an outcast. I derived no personal or community benefit from the many decades of violence. My personal safety and security outside the country is exponentially higher because I no longer identify myself with their culture or context. As a result of these acts of violence, I lost much—personally, financially, socially and in numerous other ways. I left behind my ancestral property, my people, my culture, and everything I hold near and dear to my heart and moved to a new and different culture where I have to care for myself and my family and bring up third culture kids. My most urgent need today is to forget my past as much as I can and look towards my future. On the other hand, I would have preferred a political ideology to evolve during this time that could have led to winning the hearts of people towards the struggle for greater equality and rights for and among the Tamil peoples. The "ballot rather than the bullet" approach could have drawn a much broader support from all people in the country rather than the violence and bloodshed.

From a Biblical perspective, whenever I have experienced conflict and violence, I have reminded myself of one of the last few words of our Lord Jesus Christ before He was crucified, "... for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." (Matthew 26:52). All those who directly or indirectly carried out

acts of conflict have fallen victim to the same. The terrorist leader who built bunkers and fortresses to protect himself was shot and killed while surrendering. As a member of the minority Tamil community in Sri Lanka, I have experienced first-hand, intense hatred and disrespect from the majority Sinhalese community. However, I have never returned any hatred to any individual. My family and I have been more interested in carrying out our affairs of life and would prefer to live again, by the words of our Lord Jesus who said, “. . . love your enemies. . .” (Matthew 5:44). We have had no intention to pay back evil for evil, but rather to pay back forgiveness and love many times over.

In closing, I connect two Sri Lankan songs every Sri Lankan will know and adore. One is the much-loved and highly venerated “*Danno Budunge*,” meaning “knowing the Buddha’s scripture.” This song was written in 1903 by the famous Sri Lankan composer and poet John De Silva, who was born to Catholic parents and educated in leading Christian schools. “*Danno Budunge*” portrays the thirty-sixth chapter of the Mahāvamsa chronicling the visit of the Buddha and ancient Kings of Sri Lanka. In this song, the virtuous King Sri Sangabo and his two friends Gotabhaya and Sangatissa travel to Anuradhapura, the royal city to serve the Sinhalese King. The Mahāvamsa was authored by a Buddhist monk in the same ancient city around 500 AD.

The second is *The Hymn for Sri Lanka* composed by the Rev. Walter Stanley Senior, English scholar, poet, and member of the Church Missionary Society in 1923. He is known as the “Bard of Sri Lanka.” Senior borrowed the “*Danno Budunge*” melody and made a slight change to the end of every verse. The missionary pastor perhaps was attempting to reconcile two communities and found a common ground—a melody and helped draw a parallel and a musical meeting of minds and perhaps thought this would bridge the gap if not narrow down the divide. To this day, the Hymn for Sri Lanka is sung at most church services in all three languages and is worth singing and reading:

Jehovah, Thou hast promised  
 The isles shall wait for Thee  
 The joyous isles of ocean  
 The jewels of the sea  
 Lo! we, this island’s watchmen  
 Would give and take no rest

For thus hast Thou commanded  
Till our dear land is blessed  
Then bless her mighty Father  
With blessings needed most  
In every verdant village  
By every palmy coast  
On every soaring mountain  
O'er every spreading plain  
May all her sons and daughters  
Thy righteousness attain  
Give peace within her borders  
Twixt man and man goodwill  
The love all unsuspecting  
The love that works no ill  
In loyal lowly service  
Let each from other learn  
The guardian and the guarded  
Till Christ Himself return  
To Him our land shall listen  
To Him our peoples kneel  
All rule be on His shoulder  
All wrong beneath His heel  
O consummation glorious  
Which now by faith we sing  
Come, cast we up the highway  
That brings us back our King!

May these profound and prophetic words of Rev. Senior be fulfilled for all peoples and all nations to witness to the world about Sri Lanka, the Resplendent Land!

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The Pettah* refers to the central business district of Colombo, the business capital of Sri Lanka.
- <sup>2</sup> In cricket, bowling is the act of throwing a leather ball toward the batsman following the rules of delivery without overstepping the line. It is customary for a cricket player to excel in either bowling, batting, or fielding. Any player who excels in two or more roles is called an all-rounder.
- <sup>3</sup> In cricket, wickets are the three wooden sticks planted on the two sides of the field to create the crease, the precise point from which the batsman has to hit the ball.
- <sup>4</sup> “Howzat” is truncated from “how is that?” where cricket fielders appeal to the umpire standing behind the wickets on the opposite side to declare the batsman “out.” The umpire can uphold or decline the appeal.
- <sup>5</sup> A Cadjan hut is a dwelling made of mud and stone, while the roof is covered with dried, thatched coconut palms.
- <sup>6</sup> Ranjan George and S.R. Clegg, “An Inside Story: Tales From the Field—Doing Organizational Research in a State of Insecurity,” *Organizational Studies* 18, no. 6 (November 1, 1997): 1015-1023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069701800606>.
- <sup>7</sup> Oded Haklai and Neophytos Loizides, eds., *Settlers in Contested Lands: Territorial Disputes and Ethnic Conflicts* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

