

## AN EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SOUTH INDIAN INFLUENCE ON SRI LANKA (WITH REFERENCE TO CHOLA EMPIRE)

Imanga Nadeeshani<sup>1</sup>, Udaya Nelum Rathnayaka<sup>2</sup>,  
Waruni Iresha Ekanayaka<sup>3</sup>\*

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

<sup>2</sup>Department of History and Archaeology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

<sup>3</sup>English Language Teaching unit, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

\* [ireshawaruni@gmail.com](mailto:ireshawaruni@gmail.com)

**Key words:** Chola Empire, economic relations, Indian Ocean, political relations, Tamilnadu, South India

### Introduction

The foreign forces have a great impact on current political, social, economic and cultural sectors in Sri Lanka. Among these foreign powers, the influence of India as the largest country close to Sri Lanka is vast and unavoidable. The invisible hand of India has been able to spread its power over the countries close to it by playing an important role as the most powerful territory. As a result of that, Sri Lanka is considerably influenced by Tamilnadu state which geographically belongs to the Southern India. The main purpose of the study is to identify the current nature of the influence of Tamilnadu state while exploring the historical background of the South Indian influence on Sri Lanka. Further, the study focuses on the efforts made by Chola Empire which geographically locates at the end of the Southern Indian State and modern Tamilnadu State spreading their supremacy over

Sri Lanka from the earliest period of eleventh century (AD 40).

### Methodology

A text based analysis of the historical background of the South Indian influence on Sri Lanka was used in the study. The data was gathered by the secondary sources such as literature, documents written on the impact of Tamilnadu State on Sri Lanka. Further, primary sources such as chronicles and epigraphs and the secondary sources related to them have been incorporated to explore the historical background of the study. Accordingly, the data collected from primary and secondary sources are analysed to explore the historical framework of the South Indian influence on Sri Lanka.

### Findings of the study

Few major facts have been uncovered with the exploration of the historical

background of the influence made by Tamilnadu State. Mainly, the nature of the influence made by Indian states during the post-colonial era can be discussed under four major factors.

1. Reconciliation through discussions  
E.g.: signing agreements from the year 1948-1970
2. Rewarding  
E.g. Indu Lanka Treaty (1974-1987)
3. Restrictions and punishments  
E.g. Tamil youngsters were forced into terrorist activities in India in 1987
4. Forceful

E.g. Operation Pumalee

Apart from the above major ways employed by India to influence Sri Lanka in different occasions, the primary stages of the policy Tamilnadu State has followed with regard to Sri Lanka can be explored under four main factors.

- The influence made to enforce the 13th constitution assuring the rights of Tamil population in Sri Lanka
- The influence made by Tamilnadu main political parties, Dravida Muneethra Kazhagam (DMK party) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK party) to Sri Lankan government with regard to the actions taken for Tamil Sri Lankans.
- Tamilnadu State Government and the politicians attempted to gain the control of Kachcha Theevu island while promising to allow Tamilnadu people to fish in the sea surrounding Kachcha Theevu which possess a fertile fishing ground.
- Influence Sri Lankan Tamils by placing a large number of

### refugee camps for Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamilnadu State

The historical background of the problem clearly uncovers the fact that the impact Tamilnadu State has on Sri Lanka is not something which appeared haphazardly. The history of South Indian States including Tamilnadu State voices about the Cola kings who built powerful empires in these areas since the 10<sup>th</sup> century (AD). Without restricting to South Indian Territory, they constructed the largest empire ever built in the South Indian history taking Bengali band and India as the centre and connecting Sri Lanka and South East Asia. With this supremacy, Chola kings have been able to take the northern part of Sri Lanka under their hegemony at the end of the kingdom of Anuradhapura in 1017 AD. Sri Lanka which has been identified as a state under the Chola Empire was named as Mummadishola Mandalam. Therefore, the influence of South Indians on Sri Lanka cannot be disregarded since they have been ruling the northern part of Sri Lanka from the period of colonisation. The power they had over Sri Lanka for nearly a half century might have strengthened their forceful hand towards Sri Lankans.

Chola Empire has ruled South India as the Vijayala kingship taking Kanjoraya as the centre for nearly 500 years. The importance of their kingdom is that the ability of leading a commercial authority parallel to the political propagating and expansion. The expansion of their power depends on three main targets.

- Developing the commercial activities of the kingdom

- Developing the commercial activities in the Bengal band
- Maintains a oceanic/naval commercial authority to expand the kingdom

A systematic political propaganda has been planned to achieve these targets. The territory of the kingdom has been widened in an organised way. It can be compared to a stair case in which the stairs go up systematically. Specially, they have maintained important coastal custom centres under their political authority while considering Sri Lanka as the centre.

Even though Sri Lanka was invaded by different foreign forces from the beginning, the invasion and influence of Chola Empire can be identified as a considerable land mark in Sri Lankan history. Because, it is evident that Chola Empire has a great impact on

designing and changing the political authority, business, and cultural events in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the South Indian influence has been historically proved to be in Sri Lanka from 11 century (AD) to the modern day. The study critically explores the historical background of South Indian influence on Sri Lanka.

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