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SAFEGUARDING MOTHER TAMIL IN MULTICULTURAL QUEBEC

Sri Lankan Legends, Canadian Myths,
and the Politics of Culture

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March, 1994

A Thesis submitted
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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(shortened thesis title:)

Safeguarding Mother Tamil in multicultural Quebec

ABSTRACT

I examine the concept of "culture" being promoted in the Canadian policy of multiculturalism and by Tamil refugees safeguarding their culture in Quebec. I take culture in its relation to power as my focus. I explore what culture means to the Tamils, and how the Canadian ideology of multiculturalism is implicated in the way Tamil "culture keepers" (re)construct their cultural identity.

This research addresses popular "multiculturalism" movements which use anthropological notions of culture but fail to problematize the notion of culture itself. I illustrate how and why the concept of culture is itself culturally embedded and historically shaped, and thus dense with political implications.

It also addresses anthropological approaches which avoid realist ethnography because of its political implications. I argue that a focus on culture in its relation to power is necessary in order to examine anthropology's own continuing involvement in imperialism.

RESUME

Dans la présente étude j'examine le concept de "culture" tel que promu dans le cadre de la politique multiculturelle du gouvernement canadien et par les réfugiés Tamouls cherchant à préserver leur culture au Québec. J'emploie ici le terme de culture dans sa relation au pouvoir. J'interroge donc la signification de la culture pour les Tamouls et comment l'idéologie canadienne du multiculturalisme contribue à la (re)construction de l'identité culturelle par les "gardiens cultures" Tamouls.

Cette recherche met en cause les mouvements du multiculturalisme populaire qui tirent profit des notions anthropologiques de culture mais négligent d'attribuer une problématique au contenu. Je démontre comment et pourquoi le concept de culture est lui-même structuré par la culture et l'histoire, et ainsi saturé de conséquences politiques.

Je remets également en question les approches anthropologiques qui s'éloignent des ethnographies réalistes à cause justement des conséquences politiques. Je soutiens qu'un examen de la culture et son rapport au politique est nécessaire afin d'analyser l'engagement ininterrompu de l'anthropologie dans l'impérialisme.

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My mother was, as always, the greatest source of inspiration and support to me. I dedicate this thesis to her.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION OF TAMIL WORDS

Tamil words have been transcribed according to the system used by the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon. Long vowels are distinguished from short ones by a dash over the letter, as follows:

| short vowels | long vowels | pronunciation |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| a | ā | cup; yacht |
| i | ī | pin; eat |
| u | ū | put; boot |
| e | ē | egg; ale |
| o | ō | polite; poke |

The diphthongs ("ai" and "au") are short, unlike in Sanskrit, and are pronounced as in "kite" and "doubt."

Long consonants are distinguished from short ones by a doubling of the letter and are stressed.

Retroflexes (ṭ, ṇ, ḷ, and ṛ) are indicated by the placing of a dot beneath the letter.

Pronunciation of the dentals (the unmarked letters t, n, l, and r) is similar to the French t, n, and l, and to the Scottish r.

The roman letters n and r are pronounced against the ridge of the teeth: r is trilled when preceded by a vowel; nr is pronounced like hundred with the "r" trilled. The combination "rr" is pronounced like "ttr."

Some other commonly seen combinations are pronounced as follows:

| Tamil combination | approximate pronunciation |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| aṅka | anga |
| aṅca | anja |
| ampa | amba |
| aka | aha |
| akka | akka |
| aca | asa |
| acca | atcha |
| apa | aba |
| appa | appa |
| asa | asa |
| aṣa | asha |
| ata | atha |

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CHAPTER ONE: THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

1.1 Preamble.

In this thesis I critically examine the concept of "culture" being promoted in the Canadian policy of multiculturalism and by Sri Lankan Tamil refugees consciously and actively safeguarding their cultural identity in Quebec. I take culture in its relation to power as my focus. My project is to understand what cultural activity means to the Tamils who are engaged in it, and whether and how the Canadian ideology of multiculturalism is implicated in how Tamil "culture keepers" (re)construct their own cultural identity.

On one hand, this research addresses academic and popular movements, such as "culture studies" and "multiculturalism," which use anthropological notions of culture as an idiom of resistance against dominant hegemonies but fail to draw on the insights of anthropology to problematize the notion of culture itself. My aim is to provide a clear illustration of how and why the concept of culture is itself culturally embedded and historically

shaped, and thus not neutral or value-free, but dense with political implications.

I argue that both Tamil culture keepers and the federal policy of multiculturalism are promoting an "authenticated" image of culture, which draws on colonialist theories of race and nationalist ideologies of a common cultural identity, and which is coterminous with ethnic identity. While these "authenticated" images of culture intersect, their meanings differ. For Tamils actively involved in reaffirming their cultural identity in Montreal, identity is (re)constructed out of the intersecting traditions of Canadian nationalism, with its image of an ethnic mosaic, and Jaffna Tamil nationalism, with its image of "pure" Tamil language and culture (*kalāccāram*). Everyday notions of Tamilness are debated, understood, and constructed out of the "commonsense" of these converging histories, in ways that are specific to their situation in the context of Quebec nationalism. Thus, while the same image of "culture" may be being used by federal policy makers and by ethnic community leaders (re)shaping their identity in Canada, it does not follow that this image of culture will have the same meaning for each of its users. Culture theorists and multiculturalists who focus on the boundaries of culture, rather than on who creates those boundaries and why, will miss this meaning aspect and its political implications.

On the other hand, the thesis addresses the current

crisis of representation in anthropology. I argue that new approaches to anthropology which advocate avoiding any realist ethnography out of fear of violating the "other" (e.g., Clifford and Marcus 1986) are missing an important opportunity to go even further in "decolonizing" anthropology. I contend that the relationship between culture and power is not merely one where subordinate groups are the victims of the cultural hegemony of dominant groups. My research illustrates that both the "other" and the "self" are "active victims" in perpetuating ideologies; that both are using the same construction of "authenticated" culture in (re)shaping both the "other" and the "self," and that the myths and ideologies of both dominant and subordinate cultures are implicated and dialectically related in this process. In the post-colonial setting of the 1990s, "we" are still involved in shaping the "other," because the myths and ideologies of both the dominant and subordinate cultures are part of the realm of the commonsensical view of the "other" and are therefore necessarily implicated in how the "other" constructs itself.

Comaroff and Comaroff (1991), Taussig (1987) and others have responded to the crisis of representation in anthropology by doing the anthropology of colonialism, revealing the structures and processes by which the myths and ideologies of dominant cultures were involved in how the "other" (re)shaped itself during the colonial encounter.

I suggest that rather than abandoning any "realist" ethnography because of its political implications, anthropologists could draw on the insights of these theorists and turn to an anthropology of post-colonialism, making central the connections between culture and power in order to examine how the myths and ideologies of dominant cultures continue to be implicated in how the "other" constructs itself. Such an approach not only presents possibilities for a non-invasive anthropology of contemporary societies, but also allows for a critical examination of anthropology's own continuing involvement in imperialism.

1.2 Issues.

The post-colonial structure of the current global political system has caused an implosion of "culture" into every aspect of life. Terms such as "cultural sensitivity" and "multiculturalism" have become the trademark of the "politically correct" 1990s, and what used to be considered strictly the terrain of anthropologists is quickly becoming a routine part of the daily lives of government policy makers, educators, literary critics, ethnic community leaders, and others.

Turner has argued that in fact the meaning of "culture" is currently undergoing a historical transformation, and has become a source of values that can be converted into

political assets -- people all over the world are turning to ethnic and cultural identity as a means of mobilizing themselves for the defense of their social, political, and economic interests (Turner 1993:423). The authority and rhetoric of ethnography and anthropological concepts of "culture" are being used and re-worked in new ways to construct this discourse (Rosaldo 1993:39, Clifford 1986:3).

In its academic form, one manifestation of these new uses of "culture" is in the field of "cultural studies." Cultural studies is concerned with subcultures, media, and genres of representation of groups on the margins of the hegemonic classes and status groups of British and American society. This field of inquiry, comprised of literary critics, artists, media people, and others, uses "culture" as an object of description and critique, with the aim of valorizing subordinated forms of knowledge (Turner 1993, Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1993).

In the United States, the field of cultural studies also manifests itself in a popular form of cultural critique known as "multiculturalism." While cultural studies is an academic movement, multiculturalism is a social movement, primarily concerned with introducing minority literature and art forms into undergraduate education (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1993, Turner 1993). In Canada and Australia, a "multiculturalism" movement also exists, but draws on notions of "culture" from nationalist and ethnic revival

movements, rather than from the field of cultural studies. In both of these countries, multiculturalism has been federal government policy since the 1970s (Atkinson 1988), but has also been part of both academic and popular movements which seek to promote and preserve the heritage of cultural communities.

While the field of cultural studies proposes to "reorder the world of expert knowledge, recasting method and pedagogy as elements of public culture" (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1993:513), multiculturalism seeks to unite all minority voices in resistance against dominant cultures (Turner 1993). The first presents a globalized and univocal minority "culture," and avoids cross-cultural comparisons and any ("Western") representation of the "other;" the second presents a multiplicity of bounded and distinct minority "cultures," coterminous with ethnic and nationalist identities. Both present an "authenticated," reified, and fossilized image of culture.

Many anthropologists are becoming increasingly concerned with the concept of "culture" being used in both cultural studies and multiculturalism. The critique is that these fields have adopted the anthropological concept of "culture" without drawing on the insights of anthropology to problematize the notion of "culture" itself (Kaufert 1990, Young 1990, Perry 1992, Bottomley 1992b, Geyer 1993, Turner 1993). The topic of multiculturalism was in fact a main

theme at the 1992 annual meeting of the American Anthropology Association, with Association president Annette Wiener asking the question "Where is anthropology's voice?" (Weiner 1992).

Turner (1993:411) and Rosaldo (1993:xvi) argue that few anthropologists appear to have made the effort to comprehend the reasons for the indifference toward anthropology from the standpoint of what multiculturalists are trying to do, and fewer still have taken an active part in the discussions surrounding multiculturalism. While a few anthropologists have been involved in and made significant contributions to problematizing the notion of "culture" for multiculturalists (e.g., Kaufert 1990), "most of us have been sitting around like so many disconsolate intellectual wallflowers, waiting to be asked to impart our higher wisdom, and more than a little resentful that the invitations never come" (Turner 1993:411).

I contend that the reluctance to "make anthropology an integral, indispensable part of multiculturalism" (Rosaldo 1993:xvi) is due in part to anthropology's own immersion in postmodernist culture theory. While postmodernism has been responsible for blurring divisions between culture and everyday life, between "high" culture and "popular" culture (Semsek and Stauth 1988:698, Connor 1989:224, Coombe 1991:196), it has also led to the emergence of new approaches to anthropology, which reject the possibility of

representing a cultural subject through realist ethnography (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Tyler 1986). I argue that these new approaches must be carefully re-thought in order for anthropology to reflect on its own continuing involvement in imperialism in the post-colonial settings of the 1990s and beyond.

1.3 New Directions in Anthropology.

While others are gradually incorporating anthropological notions of "culture" and the discourse of ethnography into their own fields, the lesson of postmodernism for anthropologists is that the concept of "culture" and the authority of ethnography must be questioned. Given that the task of representing the "other" implies colonial relations of power (e.g., Gough 1968, Asad 1973, Fabian 1983), and that even the notion of "culture" is not neutral and value-free but is intensely political in nature (Clifford and Marcus 1986), a good number of anthropologists are no longer comfortable doing traditional anthropology and are struggling to find their voice in a more sensitive version of the discipline.

Several strains of revisionist anthropology have emerged to respond to what has become an "identity crisis" for anthropology. One of the most influential of these is the "experimental ethnography" approach proposed by Clifford and Marcus (1986). Theorists who follow the experimental

ethnography approach believe that the writing of ethnography is nothing but an assertion of power, a claim to authority. They assert that the solution to doing anthropology lies in producing ethnographies which represent many voices, multiple texts, and plural authorities (e.g., Clifford 1980, 1983; Marcus and Cushman 1982; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Rabinow and Sullivan 1987; Tyler 1986). Drawing on the insights of postmodernist theory from the field of cultural studies, they call for a new kind of anthropological description that would emphasize the present fragmentation of "culture" and not search for truth, and that would leave culture as open-ended, ambiguous, and in flux, with no clearly situated observer or observed. This approach, then, is one which attempts to avoid creating a clearly defined "other," and instead focuses on the ways in which ethnography encounters others in relation to itself. In this new ethnography, every version of an "other" is also the construction of a "self" (Clifford 1986:23).

A second approach which has had a profound impact on shaping new approaches to anthropology is that of Edward Said. Said, a Palestinian Arab professor of comparative literature, writes passionately about his observations of the West observing the Arabs (Richardson 1990:16). He believes that the discipline of anthropology can never be free of relations of power and will always be guilty of "orientalism." The concept of "orientalism" was introduced

to anthropology by Said (1978), who used it to signify the Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the "Orient." For Said, the solution to the dilemma of (mis)representing the other is for Western anthropologists, particularly American anthropologists, to examine closely their own continuing involvement with the ongoing process of imperialism (1989:217).

The experimental ethnography and orientalism schools of thought have been invaluable in helping to decolonize anthropology. But while their emphasis on how Europe shaped the Orient (Said 1978) or how traditional anthropology has shaped its subject (Clifford and Marcus 1986), are important in this respect, I contend that their strong ties with culture theory has meant that anthropology has been backed into a corner. If we assume the nonexistence of cultural systems, where all history and all society is really a text and all representation is arbitrary ("interpretations and interpretations of interpretations" [Rabinow and Sullivan 1979:6]) then how are we able to address the issue, as Said has urged, of anthropology's own continuing involvement in imperialism?

I argue that there are three major limitations to the experimental ethnography and orientalism approaches to decolonizing anthropology. First, they assume that the only viable alternative for anthropology lies in bypassing issues of power altogether -- in avoiding representing the "other"

in order to avoid violating the "other." I argue that anthropological insights into relations of power and the structure of authority places the discipline in an advantageous position to deal with the inequities in which the "we" are necessarily involved. As the Comaroffs have pointed out, if anthropology has been an instrument of colonialism, then it can also serve as an instrument of liberation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:xiii). By helping to deconstruct the involvement of government policies and programmes in perpetuating relations of power, for instance, anthropologists can make a useful contribution.

Second, the approaches of Clifford and Marcus, Said, and others tend to perpetuate some problematic understandings of the relation between "us" and "them" or the anthropologist/self and the native/other. This dichotomy is particularly problematic given the global situation of the 1990s, where many of the world's population are refugees or migrants, since the "us" versus "them" implies a dichotomy between an unproblematized "home" and "far away," or a "here" and "there." The dualism of an "us" versus an "other" also implies that the West from which the anthropologist comes is transparent. Carrier refers to this as "occidentalism" (1992:198). Gupta and Ferguson ask "Who is this 'we'?" and point out that for ethnographers, as for other natives, the post-colonial world is an interconnected social space; "for many anthropologists -- and perhaps

especially for displaced Third World scholars -- the identity of 'one's own society' is an open question" (1992:14).¹ They point to this implied link between identity and place, and ask the question "to which places do the hybrid cultures of post-coloniality belong?" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7-8; see also Appadurai 1991).

Third, I am concerned that an emphasis solely on how a Western "us" shapes the Oriental or African "other" denies that the "other" may also be involved in the process of reshaping cultural identities. As Genovese (1974), Taussig (1987), Comaroff and Comaroff (1991), Keesing (1992) and others have shown, the "other" was involved in reshaping itself during colonialism, not only through overt confrontation, but also through the "hidden transcripts" (Scott 1990) of resistance. That the "other" is not a passive victim, but is an "active victim"² in relations of power resonates even clearer for post-colonial settings: for groups of people united in separatist movements (either in the context of "Third World" nationalist movements or ethnic revival movements in the West), cultural identity may be linked to imagined homelands and mythical pasts, rather than to actual geographical locations,³ and thus traditional

¹Note that this is the opposite perspective on the "native anthropologist" to that taken by Said.

²It was John Leavitt who suggested that the term "active victim" might accurately capture this concept.

³This will be developed later in this chapter.

colonial relations of power do not hold true. In such situations the spatial boundaries and structures of power between subordinate and dominant groups are blurred, and the relationship between "dominant" and "subordinate" is clearly not a unilinear process of the West shaping the "other" but is dialectic and complex.

Some anthropologists (e.g., Taussig 1987, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Keesing 1992) have taken the lessons of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Said (1978) to heart -- particularly the assumption that culture does not stand apart from the forms of exploitation and power that exist in society, but is implicated in and inscribed by these practices. However, rather than turning away from representing the "other" out of a fear of violating the other, these theorists reaffirm a role for anthropology. Their project is to reveal the structures and processes by which the myths and ideologies of dominant cultures were involved in how the "other" (re)shaped itself during the colonial encounter. Drawing on the insights of theorists such as Foucault (e.g., 1979, 1980a, 1980b), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), and De Certeau (1984), these theorists illustrate how power is best understood not in macropolitical terms, but in the micropolitical networks of power relations subsisting at every point in a society. Their projects help to understand the shortcomings of the experimental ethnography and orientalism approaches, reconceiving the concept of culture

in ways that integrate it into a study of power, making culture in its relation to power the focus.

I suggest that this historical anthropology approach has opened up exciting possibilities for an anthropology of post-colonialism. In particular, it lends itself to an analysis of how anthropological notions of culture are being used in the field of culture studies, in multiculturalism movements, and by subordinated groups (re)constructing their identity and mobilizing themselves in resistance against dominant hegemonies.

1.4 Statement of Intent.

This dissertation is a critical examination of the concept of "culture" being promoted in the Canadian policy of multiculturalism and by Sri Lankan Tamil refugees consciously and actively (re)shaping their cultural identity in Quebec. My project is to understand what cultural activity means to the Tamils who are involved in safeguarding Tamil culture. I will explore the "politics of culture" (Handler 1988) within the Tamil community and juxtapose local Tamil ideologies of culture with the federal ideology of multiculturalism. I take culture in its relation to power as my focus, examining whether and how the Canadian multiculturalism policy is implicated in how Tamil "culture keepers" (re)construct their own cultural identity.

My position is that the relationship between culture

and power is not merely one where subordinate groups are the victims of the cultural hegemony of dominant groups. Therefore, I examine how both the "other" and the "self" are "active victims" in perpetuating ideologies; how both are using the same construction of "authenticated" culture in (re)shaping both the "other" and the "self," and how the myths and ideologies of both the dominant and subordinate cultures are implicated and dialectically related in this process.

1.5 Theoretical Framework.

The phrase "the politics of culture" was introduced by Handler (1988)¹ and addresses the question of how culture is created in the context of political power and unequal access to cultural production. A politics of culture approach implies the creation of tradition in the service of nationalism and ethnicity.

I depart from the approach of Handler in that I assume that cultural identity is reconstructed from internalized knowledge re-worked in new ways, using symbols already in place and images that already bear meaning (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), and that therefore the way in which cultural identity is constructed is itself culturally embedded and historically shaped.

¹The phrase has also been used by Williams (1991) and Bottomley (1992a).

This means that, in bringing the relationship between culture and power to the forefront of the analysis, the matrix within which cultural identity is constructed lies not only in the consciousness of the elites who are reshaping culture to suit their own ideological motives. I argue that cultural hegemony is not a unilinear process of dominant groups imposing their will on subordinate groups by making the cultural "natural" and part of the commonsense of the masses. Rather, ideological knowledge is multivalent and at times contradictory (Young 1983), and both dominant and subordinate peoples are thinking, feeling "active victims," who both shape, and are shaped by, the naturalizing structures of commonsense.

My theoretical framework, then, falls within the "critical interpretive" approach as it is used by Young (1983), Comaroff (1985), Frankenberg (1986), Taussig (1987), Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) and Lock and Gordon (1988). These theorists make explicit the connection between culture and power, by demonstrating that culture constitutes not only meanings but also an ideology. To explain this point, I will turn to a discussion of "ideology" and "culture," since the distinction between the two is central to my theoretical argument. I will analyze each of these concepts in turn.

Ideology. The concept of ideology has gone through many transformations of meaning since it first appeared in

eighteenth-century France, leaving the term so ambiguous and controversial that it is often avoided (McLellan 1986:1-8, Thompson 1990:28-33). Its current usage in anthropology can be categorized into two approaches: (1) a "neutral" conception of ideology, free of any negative connotations, which equates ideologies with systems of thought, systems of belief, or symbolic systems which pertain to social action or political practice -- what Geuss calls ideology in the "descriptive" sense (Geuss 1981:4-12) and Thompson calls a "neutral" conception of ideology (Thompson 1990:5); and (2) a critical sense which focuses on the concept of the interrelations of meaning and power, which sees ideology as meaning in the service of power (Geuss 1981:12-22, Thompson 1990:7).

Much of the "interpretive" school of thought within anthropological theory has been concerned with the first approach to ideology, that is, ideology in the "neutral" sense. In this view, ideology is equivalent to the cultural construction of reality -- ideology is reduced to culture (Young 1983:203). For instance, the writings of Geertz involve a view of ideology as a cultural system (1973:193-233), much in the same way as religion is a cultural system. Theorists such as Marcus and Fischer who incorporate the theories of Geertz tend not to link the symbols of ideology with larger economic or political structures, taking a value-free approach and seeing any inequalities of power as

merely part of the overall "cultural system."

In contrast, the critical interpretive approach within anthropology is concerned with ideology in its critical sense, that is, ideology as meaning in the service of power (e.g., Young 1983, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Lock and Gordon 1988). Influenced in part by the work of Foucault (1979, 1980a, 1980b), Bourdieu (1977), and De Certeau (1984), theorists of the critical interpretive approach are explicitly concerned with ideology as power, and with how the mythicization of ideology -- the naturalization of culture in order to maintain power imbalances -- is both constituted by, and embedded in, culture. They examine how symbolic forms establish and sustain relations of power in the cultural contexts within which they are produced and are in turn embodied. Following the critical interpretive approach, my use of the term "ideology" falls within the critical sense of the term, and includes the claim that ideology is culturally produced and that the legitimation and mythicization of ideology by social actors is culturally and historically embedded.

Second, in the spirit of a critical interpretive approach, I am concerned with how individuals as thinking, feeling actors may both react against, and help to perpetuate, relations of power. This entails a focus not only on the realm of discourse, but also on the contradictions between what is said, what is believed, and

what is practised, in the context of everyday life. On this issue I use elements of Giddens's (1984) theory of "structuration," which recognizes the importance of the active embodied subject ("agency") in the socio-political context, as well as Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony" (1971), which takes account of both force and consent in socio-political dominance. Both Giddens and Gramsci incorporate the idea that people in subordinate positions are what I call "active victims," rather than passive victims, of inegalitarian social structures -- that they are, as Althusser argues, subjects in the sense of both a "centre of initiatives," and a "subjected being" (Althusser 1977:169).

Third, I believe that individuals in both dominant and subordinate positions are thinking, reflecting actors, and that both are "active victims" in the legitimation of ideology. Ideology is not exclusively an instrument of the dominant class for the control of subordinate groups. Young's position on ideology clarifies this. He argues that when writers identify "ideology" with (i) systems of rationalized knowledge with objective (class) boundaries, (ii) which are products of totalizing social structures and apparatuses, and (iii) necessarily serve ruling class interests, then the process of ideology and ideological hegemony "is reduced to an objectified state of mystification and domination, such as 'false consciousness'"

(Young 1983:215-216).

The concept of "hegemony" makes explicit the connections between culture and power. Hegemony can be understood as that part of a dominant worldview which is "naturalized" and thus does not appear as ideology. This type of power lies in the realm of the taken-for-granted or the commonsensical and may not be experienced as the implementation of power at all, since it is hidden in the habits of everyday life and is regenerated through repetitive, everyday acts (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991).

Gramsci used the concept of cultural hegemony to address the relation between culture and power under capitalism. As Lears pointed out, Gramsci's notion of a "contradictory consciousness," meaning that all people share a kind of "half conscious" complicity in their own victimization, implies that ideology may not necessarily entail only the struggle between oppressors and oppressed, but rather may also reveal a process by which the dominant group successfully avoids such a confrontation (Lears 1985:573).

This avoidance of confrontation represents a kind of subtle or hidden power, as opposed to the power of direct confrontation. Perhaps the best theoretical orientation into understanding the hidden power of hegemony is through Bourdieu's concept of "doxa." Bourdieu distinguishes between overt power, in the form of written laws or

"orthodoxy," and power which is hidden in the forms of everyday life -- what he calls "doxa."

Just as the power of doxa is hidden in the anonymous, quiet acts of everyday life, so too are the counter-hegemonic acts and discourses, or resistances to the hidden power of ideology. The power of doxa is rarely contested directly, but lies in what Scott (1990) calls "hidden transcripts" -- resistance here is not seen in overt, political action, but, like the power it "confronts," is expressed covertly in hundreds of everyday acts (e.g., Genovese 1974; Scott 1985, 1990; Brow 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Keesing 1992). Keesing posed the question of whether we can speak of resistance when the subordinated subjects do not understand their own actions in these terms, when the subordinated apparently accept their situation of powerlessness yet harbour dreams of liberation and struggle -- in short, whether resistance need imply conscious agency (Keesing 1992:224-226). He argued that it is not so much the act that matters as the actor's reading of its context and meaning (Keesing 1992:223; see also Abu-Lughod 1990).

Following this call for attention to be paid to the actor's reading of the context and to the meaning of resistance, I am interested in listening to the multiple voices of the subordinated "others." I contend that neither the dominant nor the subordinate group involved in relations

of power are a unified, homogeneous whole, and therefore the understanding of who is "in charge" of creating or perpetuating dominant ideologies and the counter-ideologies of resistance, is complex. Different motivations exist -- both personal and political -- for why ideologies are both framed and adhered to.

Culture. Nineteenth-century anthropology was predominantly a system for the hierarchical classification of race, and was inextricably linked to colonialism. It emerged as a discipline at the beginning of the colonial era, and throughout its history it was devoted to the description and analysis by Europeans of non-European societies dominated by the West (Asad 1973). The way that an anthropological concept of "culture" developed thus cannot be separated out from issues of colonialism, nationalism, and racism.

The term "culture" comes from the Latin "colere," meaning to inhabit, cultivate, protect, or honour with worship. It arose as a noun of process referring to the tending of animals or crops. Eventually the term came to be extended to a process of human development, alongside the original meaning in husbandry, to refer to the culture of minds (Williams 1976:79). In the eighteenth century, the concept of "culture" was equated with the idea of "civilization," which was seen as the destined goal of all mankind, and was often used to account for apparent racial

differences. Nineteenth-century concepts of "race" and "evolution" added an historical dimension to this notion of breeding and tempering of the self (Wagner 1981:21), and civilization was increasingly seen as the achievement of certain "races" (Stocking 1968:36). Thus, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one spoke of a "cultivated" person as someone who was civilized, or who "had" culture (Wagner 1981:21). The term was associated with manifestations of human creativity: art, science, knowledge, and refinement -- "those things that freed man from control by nature, by environment, by reflex, by instinct, by habit or by custom" (Stocking 1968:201).

The assumption that civilization or culture is a universal and unilinear process was first disputed by Herder, in his unfinished "Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind" [1784-91] (Williams 1976:79). Herder argued that one must speak of "cultures" in the plural, to mean the specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods and also the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation (Ibid.). This usage of the term remained comparatively isolated (Ibid.), and until about 1900 "culture," both in the German and in the Anglo-American tradition, still had not acquired its characteristic modern anthropological connotations (Stocking 1968:202).

It was Franz Boas who played a crucial role in the

emergence of the contemporary anthropological concept of culture (Stocking 1968:202). Like Herder, Boas attacked the evolutionist perspective, arguing that there is no relationship between race and culture, and that the difference between populations is a function of cultural differences, independent of racial characteristics. Boas introduced the idea that, since there are no inferior or superior cultures, all cultures are comparable. It was in this way that the singular "culture" of the evolutionists, and its "cultural stages" of savagery, barbarism, and civilization, was replaced with the historically conditioned plural "cultures" of modern anthropology (Stocking 1968:229).

Williams outlines three broad active categories of usage of culture: i) the independent noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development, and which emerged in the eighteenth century; 2) the independent noun which indicates a particular way of life of a people, a period, or a group, introduced by Herder in the nineteenth century; and 3) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity (Williams 1976:81).

The third usage of the term -- culture as music, literature, painting, theatre and so on -- is the contemporary popular conception of "culture." This concept

of culture continues to draw upon images of progress and the terminology of crop breeding and improvement to create an image of personal control, refinement, and "domestication" (Wagner 1981:21). Toward the end of the twentieth century, this popular conception of culture is becoming conflated with the Boasian concept of "culture" (meaning national cultures, traditional cultures, and folk cultures), resulting in a popular "anthropological" usage of culture which retains notions of "high" culture.

The relationship of ideology to culture. In order to set the stage for the analysis of the ways in which the concept of "culture" is used both by the Canadian government and by Tamils safeguarding their cultural identity, I will outline what I mean by "culture," and the ways in which ideology is distinct from, but involved in, culture. I separate out the concept of "culture" into three levels: authenticated culture, everyday culture, and commonsensical culture. Ideology operates by moving between the authenticated, everyday, and commonsensical realms, being promoted in the first; "felt," contested, absorbed and/or dismissed in the second; and grounded in the third.

Authenticated culture: On one level, as many works on nationalism and ethnicity have illustrated, it is the elites of a given society who construct, maintain, and control the culture which is being reified and naturalized, (re)invented and perceived as shared and representative of the "nation"

or ethnic group (Anderson 1983, Handler 1988, Herzfeld 1982, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Kapferer 1988a). I will refer to this type of culture as "authenticated culture."

Authenticated culture can be discussed and analyzed, observed by "outsiders," reflected on, and wilfully manipulated. Handler describes this type of culture as "cultural objectification." His term was inspired by Bernard Cohn (n.d. 5), who has written of Western-educated intellectuals in India who "have made [their culture] into a 'thing' and can stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity" (Handler 1988:14). This, then, is a "modernist" view of culture -- culture as an art museum (to use Rosaldo's example), where "cultures stand as sacred images; they have an integrity and coherence that enables them to be studied...on their own terms, from within, from the 'native' point of view" (1993:43).

Everyday culture: Everyday culture is the realm where culture is analyzed and spoken about. This is where different actors construct and reconstruct different models of what "authentic" identity is, and, once identified, these become objectified and fossilized into authenticated culture. Everyday culture includes the bits and pieces of habits and beliefs that are used to construct the image of authenticated culture -- including mundane habits of eating and working, but also including ritual, art, and so on.

This, then, is the realm of cultural activity, where the producers and nonproducers of culture work, like "bricoleurs" (Levi-Strauss 1966:17) to construct their authenticated culture.

The distinction between authenticated culture and everyday culture can be clarified by using Saussure's distinction between "signifier" and "signified," or "concept" and "sound-image." There is a structural relationship between the concept of "tree" and the sound-image made by the word "tree" (Hawkes 1977:25). Similarly, "authenticated culture" refers not to the meaning evoked by any example of culture, but rather to the example itself. It is in the realm of "everyday culture" that the meanings implied in any example of culture are evoked, contested, reconstructed, and so on.

Commonsensical culture: "Commonsensical" culture is that which is taken-for-granted, hidden, and not subject to analysis by the bearer of that culture. The way in which "authenticated culture" is constructed out of, and in the realm of, everyday culture is grounded in, shaped, and limited by the structures of commonsensical culture.

The distinction between everyday and commonsensical culture is a standard Boasian view of culture. Boas's argument was that the behaviour of all people is determined by a traditional body of habitual behaviour patterns (everyday culture), passed on through the enculturative

process which is "buttressed by the ethnically tainted secondary rationalizations" -- in other words, the particular "cultures" in which they lived (Stocking 1968:222).

Again, a linguistic model can be used to clarify the way in which commonsensical culture structures everyday culture. Boas observed that the grammatical pattern of a language determines those aspects of each experience that must be expressed in the given language (Stocking 1968:264). Each language is arbitrary in its classification, and the classifications develop in each individual entirely subconsciously and "build a kind of linguistic mythology which may direct the attention of the speaker and some mental activities of the given speech community along definite lines" (Jakobson 1971:482).

Similarly, the meanings evoked by any example of "authenticated culture" and the way in which knowledge about authenticated culture is debated, reconstructed, and so on, are shaped by the structures of "commonsensical" culture. The types of materials available to consciousness to be used to construct identity will be radically different for people who do not share the same "commonsensical culture." Thus, authenticated culture is created out of everyday culture, but grounded in commonsensical culture, and therefore its meanings will vary enormously among people who do not share the same historical or personal experiences.

Ideology operates by moving among the authenticated, everyday, and commonsensical realms, being promoted in the first, grounded in the third, and "felt," contested, absorbed and/or dismissed in the second. Young's analysis of the concept of ideology is useful for explaining this. Young separates ideology into three levels -- ideological discourse, ideological knowledge, and ideological process (Young 1983). This division of ideology into three levels helps to clarify my position on how ideology is related to my concepts of "authenticated culture," "everyday culture," and "commonsensical culture."

Ideological discourse: "Authenticated culture" is the site of what Young calls ideological discourse, where ideological knowledge is organized into trajectories of dominant facts and meanings.

Ideological knowledge: "Everyday culture" is the site of ideological knowledge, where manifold and contradictory facts and meanings are produced and come to occupy the consciousness of the individual.

Ideological process: "Commonsensical culture" is the site of ideological process, where discourses are given authority and, sometimes, incorporated into ideological hegemonies.

What makes Young's tripartite analysis of ideology special is that he sees ideological knowledge as intrinsically indeterminate -- knowledge is manifold and

unstable, and people have the freedom to reconstruct the meaning of events (1983:207). The implications of this for my distinction between authenticated, everyday, and commonsensical cultures can be clarified by turning again to the linguistic analogy. Two people whose knowledge is structured by the same language may understand "tree-ness" in two different ways (for example, as a pine tree in northern Ontario, or a palm tree in the tropics); and any one person may, depending on the immediate context, think of a tree as something for shade or something to be cut down for paper, or both. Furthermore, any one person may take a "meta-linguistic" approach to their understanding of a concept -- reflecting on the structure of language, rather than merely being shaped by it (Jakobson 1971:262)- thus creating new forms of knowledge about the concept.

Similarly, ideological knowledge being constructed about authenticated culture will vary between people within the Tamil community, and for any one person; and any person may be stepping in and out of the structures within which this knowledge is embedded, being not only shaped by, but also shaping, commonsensical culture.

This can be clarified by contrasting my model of the "everyday" and the "commonsensical" with that of Bourdieu. In Bourdieu's model, the field of doxa (which roughly corresponds to my notion of "commonsensical culture") is opposed to the field of opinion ("everyday culture") which

is the site of orthodox and heterodox arguments that "recognize the possibility of different and antagonistic beliefs" (Bourdieu 1977:164). For Bourdieu, the boundary between the field of opinion and the field of doxa is the site of hegemonic struggle (1977:169). In my model, however, the realm of the everyday is not only the site of dominant and subordinate groups fighting over the control of "culture," with the latter attempting to "push back the limits of doxa (commonsense) to expose its arbitrariness" (Bourdieu 1977:168). The realm of the everyday is the site of both conflict and consent, with both the dominant and subordinate groups "active victims," who each hold many, at times contradictory, beliefs about the "natural" order of things.

De Certeau (1984) urges us to understand the creativity in the activities of the daily round, to open up the question of resistance to the domination of structure, or what he calls the "scriptural system" of society. He has criticized Bourdieu's concept of the "everyday," arguing that everyday life must be understood as a dynamic and creative essence. For De Certeau, the history of colonialism is evidence of creative cultural work undertaken by its subjects. "Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others (de Certeau 1984:xii). De Certeau uses the term "La perruque" (literally, the wig) to explain this, drawing upon examples

of the activities of workers and consumers who exploit time and machines for their own ends (1984:25).

Thus, while everyday culture is learned by unconscious imitation and repetition of daily habits, which are constituted by and grounded in commonsensical culture, this process of repetition is not automatic, or automated. As Appadurai suggests, ordinary lives today are increasingly powered "not by the givenness of things, but by the possibilities that are suggested as available" -- for example, through the media, and through deterritorialization (Appadurai 1991:200). Thus, while authenticated culture -- those concepts and events which are being promoted as symbols of cultural identity -- is "built" out of the habits of everyday culture, those habits themselves, and the understandings of the authenticated culture being promoted -- are dynamic, and open to change, and the persons promoting ideologies are both shaping, and shaped by, the habits of everyday life. The site of hegemonic struggle, then, is located in the realm of the everyday, but the way in which ideologies are legitimated can not be seen as a linear process, of dominant groups shaping subordinate ones. It is, instead, a complex and dialectic process.

1.6 Organization of Thesis.

The Sri Lankan Tamil refugees began arriving into Canada in the mid-1980s, and by the time I began my

fieldwork in 1989, the Tamil community in Montreal numbered about 5,000 people, mostly young men between the ages of 20 and 35. In Chapter Two, "Culture and the Culture Keepers," I will introduce the Montreal Tamil refugee community and describe the fieldwork process. The Tamil "culture keepers" -- those who are consciously and actively promoting and preserving Tamil culture in Montreal -- equate culture with *kalāccāram*, meaning the Tamil arts including dance, drama, music, and the concepts and symbols contained in classical literature. My fieldwork was consciously directed by people who were using anthropological notions of "culture" to (re)construct their own identity. As an anthropologist, I was expected to document their concerns, the difficulties they faced, and the goals they set, for maintaining Tamil cultural identity in Canada. Rather than eliciting unconscious and unspoken understandings of culture in order to gain information about local ideologies of culture from an "innocent" population, then, my fieldwork was directed by a group of individuals who were already consciously and actively involved with the very same topic. Thus, the manner in which my fieldwork was orchestrated from within the Tamil community, rather than only producing raw data from which I constructed an argument about Tamil cultural identity in Canada, became an integral part of the final analysis on local ideologies of culture.

In Chapter Three, "Sri Lankan Legends," I will examine

the historical context of symbols of Tamil cultural identity, in order to understand why and how certain aspects of everyday life are being promoted as "authenticated" Tamil culture by Tamil culture keepers in Montreal. I will focus on the 450 years of European colonialism in Sri Lanka, the Dravidian movement in India, and Tamil resistance to Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka.

For the Tamil culture keepers in Montreal, the history of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict is understood in terms of the interaction between opposed "races," each with a distinctive language, religion, culture, and set of physical characteristics. They draw upon the concepts and symbols of Tamil cultural identity, central to contemporary Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, which emerged as part of the revival of the ancient Tamil literature. Of particular importance is the equation of "pure women" and "pure Tamil," with every Tamil male expected to protect the sacredness of Tamil womanhood and to safeguard "Mother Tamil."

I will then turn to the historical context of symbols of Canadian cultural identity. In Chapter Four, "Canadian Myths," I will examine the emergence of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism which culminated in the Multiculturalism Act of 1988. This policy of multiculturalism is central to Canadian government philosophy, and is promoted as an integral part of Canadian identity. Canadians have come to believe that unlike in the United States, where visible

minorities become part of an "ethnic melting pot" and ideally blend into mainstream society, in Canada they form an "ethnic mosaic" and retain their cultural boundaries, which separate them out from other cultural groups and from the regular, "non-ethnic" Canadians. I will show how the policy of multiculturalism emerged as an integral part of Canadian cultural identity and how this symbol is inextricably connected to Quebec's call for recognition as a distinct society and to public outcry against the influx of "Third World" immigrants to Canada.

In Chapter Five, "The Story of the Split," I will examine an ideological divide between two factions of the Tamil community over how and why Tamil cultural identity should be maintained. This divide is seen by both sides as being between those who are mainly concerned with the establishment of a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka, and those who are mainly concerned with passing on culture to the children in Montreal. The split is described within the community as being between "politics" and "culture." Culture keepers on each side are trying to unite the Tamil community under their leadership and toward their understanding of how and why Tamil culture should be maintained, in order to ensure that the Tamil language and culture are preserved.

In Chapter Six, "The Interpretations of Culture," I will analyze the way in which the Tamil concept of

kalāccāram intersects with the concept of "culture" being promoted by multiculturalism, focusing on one of the more obvious ways in which the two constructions of culture intersect -- the evening cultural programmes, or *kalai viḷā*. Tamil culture keepers apply for funding from the Department of Multiculturalism to sponsor these public displays of culture, and government officials responsible for multiculturalism are invited as honoured guests to the events. For Tamil culture keepers on the "cultural" side of the community divide, the process of preparing for the cultural events (dance, drama, music) which are part of the *kalai viḷā* is a way of ensuring that the children will learn about their language and culture, thus preserving Tamil cultural identity in Canada. For those on the "political" side of the divide, the *kalai viḷā* are a means of preserving Tamil culture because they are a way of raising money to send back to Sri Lanka to help "the boys" in their fight for an independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka -- which is the only way, they feel, to truly preserve the Tamil language and culture.

I conclude by analyzing why the Tamil culture keepers make active use of the policy of multiculturalism, arguing they do so not only because it enhances access to resources controlled by the state, but because the promotion of "authenticated culture" in multiculturalism meets with the Tamils' own agendas for promoting and preserving a distinct

Tamil culture. I will argue that this is because they arose in similar contexts: for the Tamil culture keepers, in the context of Dravidian nationalism, British colonialism in South Asia, and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Sinhalese; and for the Canadian government, in the context of Quebec nationalism, the increase in "Third World" immigrants, and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Americans. Both concepts of culture are grounded in colonialist constructions of the "other" and both reflect an effort by the elites of the "nation" to promote a firmly bounded and distinct culture, coterminous with ethnic identity.

In Chapter Seven, "Safeguarding Mother Tamil," I will take an explicitly "authoritative" stance, as an outsider observer looking in at the Tamil community, in order to examine the "commonsensical culture" in which everyday concepts of Tamilness are grounded. I will argue that Tamil culture keepers on both sides of the ideological divide draw on concepts and symbols of the ancient *Caṅkam* literature. These concepts and symbols have always been pervasive in everyday thought, but during the renaissance of Tamil literature that was part of the Dravidian movement, they were crystallized and spoken about as being central to Tamil identity (Pandian 1987). I will focus particularly on the concept of female "purity" (*kaṟpu*) and its perceived importance for preserving Tamil language and culture. In my

analysis of the relationship between "pure" women and "pure" Tamil, I will draw on the theories of Marriott (1976), Daniel (1984), Trawick (1992) and others who have shown how in Hindu thought the body is permeable, composite, partly divisible, and partly transmissible. These theorists conceptualize the South Asian person as a "dividual" whose body is composed of shared and transferred coded substances (*kunam*), which flow in and among persons. I will argue that Tamil culture keepers on both sides of the ideological divide construct authenticated Tamil culture out of this commonsensical understanding of "identity."

In Chapter Eight, "*Akam/Puṛam*," I will examine the "everyday" ways in which concepts of culture are constructed, understood, and challenged, and how these differ for the two sides of the community. I will argue that people on the "cultural" side of the community divide are oriented toward the Tamil principle of *akam*, meaning love, the interior, and women. They believe that the only way to preserve the Tamil language and culture is by ensuring that the women in Canada retain the principles of Tamil womanhood, particularly *karpu* (chastity) and *oruvaranukku oruti* (monogamy), and ensure that the children are taught the Tamil language and culture. In discussions of Tamil cultural identity, these culture keepers refer to the classical Tamil epics such as the *Cilappatikāram* ("The Anklet Story") whose heroine Kannaki is held up as an

example of the womanly virtues of chastity and self-sacrifice. They are concerned that the un-chaste lifestyle in Canada makes it difficult for Tamil women to maintain their purity. There is said to be an interconnectedness between pure Tamil and pure women, and there is a fear that too much integration into Canadian culture is leading to the downfall of the Tamil women and thus the downfall of the Tamil language and culture.

People on the "political" side of the community divide are oriented toward the Tamil principle of *puram*, associated with the exterior, war, and men. They believe that the only way to ensure that the Tamil language and culture survive is by creating a Tamil homeland (Eelam) in Sri Lanka. They believe that the community should unite in support of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to ensure the survival of the Tamil "race." In discussions of Tamil cultural identity, they refer to images of the Tamil homeland and to the legends of a flourishing Tamil culture in early Sri Lankan history. These culture keepers are worried that the fight for Eelam in Sri Lanka is a losing battle, as more and more young men flee the country and seek asylum in Canada and elsewhere. They feel that those who are in Montreal must do as much as possible to safeguard "Mother Tamil." The connection that is felt for the Tamil homeland is more than political, and is more than emotional in the sense of bereavement or longing for the homeland -- the home (*Ur*) is

connected to the physical body in a "real" way, in a relationship of contiguity, rather than merely one of emotion, and the loss of the homeland is seen to be changing the Tamil nature (*kuṇam*).

The ideological discourse about what Tamil culture is, then, is the same for Tamil culture keepers on both sides of the community divide, and for the Canadian policy of multiculturalism. At the level of everyday culture, however, the ideological knowledge about this "authenticated culture" contrasts sharply for those oriented toward the principle of "*akam*" and those oriented toward "*puṇam*."

Although the ideological knowledge being produced about "*kalāccāram*" (authenticated culture) is divided between two different constructions of Tamil identity, and draws upon different aspects of symbols of Tamil nationalism, both share the same "commonsensical" understanding of cultural identity. This "commonsensical" view of culture is that which lies within the realm of the taken-for-granted, and is not subject to discussion or analysis. This is "culture" in its classical anthropological sense (that is, pre-Writing Culture), and it is what informs the authenticated view of culture. While the ideology of the ethnic mosaic may intersect with the ideology of *kalāccāram*, each is grounded in its own "commonsensical" culture, and thus the meanings behind "culture" are necessarily radically different for people who do not share the same cultural and historical

context.

1.7 Summary.

On one hand, this thesis addresses anthropology's concern with the essentializing nature of new concepts of culture, by contributing to an understanding of exactly how "culture" is itself culturally constructed and historically shaped, and thus is dense with political implications. I have illustrated that while the same image of "culture" may be being used by federal policy makers and by ethnic community leaders (re)shaping their identity in Canada, it does not follow that this image of culture will have the same meaning for each of its users. Culture theorists and multiculturalists who focus on the boundaries of culture, rather than on who creates those boundaries and why, will miss this meaning aspect and its political implications.

On the other hand, this thesis responds to current attempts to provide new directions for anthropology. I contend that the theories of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and others which avoid the analysis of a culture out of fear of violating the "other" are missing an important opportunity to go even further in "decolonizing" anthropology. Taussig uses the term "magical mimesis" to mean the power of a copy to influence what it is a copy of (1993:59). I argue that in the messy reality of post-colonial society, both the "others" and the "selves" are "active victims" involved in

(re)constructing the cultural identity of both "others" and "selves," and the myths and ideologies of both the dominant and subordinate cultures are necessarily implicated in this process. It is my position, then, that rather than abandon any realist ethnography, we must attempt an anthropology of post-colonialism, focusing on the "politics of culture," in order to reflect critically on anthropology's own continuing involvement in imperialism.

CHAPTER TWO: TAMIL CULTURE AND THE CULTURE KEEPERS

The Tamils in Montreal equate culture with *kalāccāram*, meaning the Tamil arts including dance, drama, music, and the concepts contained in the classical literature. The role that they saw for me was as one who is documenting *kalāccāram* in Canada. I was encouraged to meet those who were considered to be experts on culture, to attend the places and events where culture was being produced, and to focus only on culture in its "authenticated" form. In this chapter I introduce the Montreal Tamil refugee community and describe the ways in which my fieldwork was orchestrated from within the Tamil community. I explain how the fieldwork process, rather than only producing raw data from which I constructed an argument about Tamil cultural identity in Canada, became an integral part of the final analysis on local ideologies of culture.

2.1 My Entry into the Community.

I made my "debut" into the Montreal Tamil community in the fall of 1988, a year before my fieldwork was

theoretically supposed to begin. The event was a Tamil *kalai vilā* ("cultural festival") a concert featuring South Indian artists to raise money for a temple in Toronto. I had decided to attend the event in order to develop a "feel" for the community before writing my Ph.D. research proposal. I walked into the lobby of the auditorium and, feeling very awkward and unsure of myself, approached the first "official-looking" person that I saw -- a man in his thirties, with a badge on his lapel written in what I supposed must be the Tamil language. I asked him (in English) where I could buy a ticket for the performance. He looked shocked, and said "but this show will be entirely in Tamil!" When I replied that I was interested in learning the language, he cut me short, took me by the arm and said "we need more Canadians like you." That was the beginning of my friendship with Sivan¹ and the moment when I was launched into the thick of fieldwork activities, long before I anticipated beginning my research.

After the concert was over, Sivan introduced me to several people within the Tamil refugee community, explaining on my behalf that I was going to be studying the Tamil language and culture (*kalāccāram*) and about the way of life (*vaḷakkam*) of Tamil refugees in Montreal. His parting

¹I have chosen to use pseudonyms rather than actual names of members of the community. While Montreal Tamils will readily identify each other, the use of pseudonyms will help to ensure privacy from people outside of the community.

line to me that evening was "Don't worry -- we'll see that you get through with a most highly successful Ph.D." That was my first hint that there were individuals within the community who are actively involved in promoting and preserving Tamil culture, who welcome an outsider interested in learning about their culture, and who have preconceived notions about just how Tamil culture should be studied.

Sivan is one of the key figures in the Tamil refugee community working to ensure that the Tamil language and culture are not forgotten in Canada. He has been involved at one time or other with each of the local Tamil community organizations, contributing mainly through writing and publishing. He has written for every Tamil language newspaper in Montreal as well as starting his own newspaper, Nāyakan, which was set aside while he was working on his second Master's degree (the first was done in Russia) in computer engineering.

Sivan has been one of my key resource people, allowing me use of his own personal library of local publications, introducing me to others in the community, keeping me informed about upcoming events which he considered to be of interest to me, and, more recently, encouraging me with the dissertation-stage of my research project. Our friendship, which started off as one of "information-exchange," grew quickly, and many of the ideas in this dissertation came about in the context of long evenings spent with him at

McGill's graduate student bar.

The second person I met who played a large role in my fieldwork was Talaivar. I met Talaivar in winter of 1988, when in order to get some background information for my dissertation proposal I visited *Onriyam*, which at the time I understood to be the only Tamil community organization. Talaivar was the administrative secretary of *Onriyam*, and on Sivan's advice I had arranged a meeting with him to find out about the organization. It was not many weeks after that initial meeting that I found myself "hanging around" his home, being fed delicious curries by Mrs. Talaivar, playing with the grandson, chatting with the two daughters living at home at the time, and watching Tamil movies. It was also through the Talaivar family that I was able to enjoy many of the special celebrations that happen in the home.

Talaivar, like Sivan, is actively working to safeguard the Tamil language and culture in Canada. He took it upon himself to ensure that I understood what Tamil culture is, and the difficulties of preserving it in the Canadian context. Although his position at *Onriyam* has ended, Talaivar continues to be a key spokesperson for the Tamil community. He has been given the official position of "multicultural officer" by the Tamil community associations, and often speaks on behalf of the community in its dealings with the wider Montreal and Canadian public. He is active in the Quebec Saiva Mission and has been a central figure in

planning the new Murukan temple. Talaivar is a well-established independent "social worker" within the community, providing translation and interpretation services, and helping newcomers to the community to deal with the vast amount of paperwork that is involved in applying for refugee status.

My third entry into the Tamil refugee community was through Shakti, an older woman, widowed and living in Montreal with her daughter. We met in the fall of 1989 just after I had completed an intensive summer programme in the Tamil language at the University of Wisconsin. I had learned that Shakti was a former school teacher and spoke English well, and I decided to ask her whether she would be interested in tutoring me in Tamil language.

At the time that I was beginning my fieldwork, Shakti was the head of the *Onriyam* Tamil Women's group and active in the South Asian Women's Community Centre. As a child, Shakti had spent many years in India where her father was a colonel in the Indian Army, and for this reason she is as comfortable speaking and writing in English as she is in Tamil. She is well-known both within the Tamil community and to many Canadians for her ability to translate not only language, but the intricacies of Tamil culture, to Canadians. She has given lectures about Tamil culture in university settings, and has often been called on by local hospitals and clinics as well as by the department of

immigration for interpretation. As head of the women's group her intent was to teach the children of the community about their cultural traditions. She believes the highlight of her involvement with the women's group was a children's pageant, honouring Tamil historical figures who had contributed to the development of the Tamil language and culture.¹ She is occasionally called upon to provide information on various aspects of Tamil religion or history for evening cultural programmes and celebrations of Hindu festivals, and has published articles on Tamil culture in local South Asian magazines.

I began taking Tamil language lessons from Shakti in the fall of 1989. Her interest in Tamil culture and in my research project meant that the lessons quickly became more of a forum for her and her daughter to expand on the meaning of a Tamil proverb, or the significance of a temple event I had attended, or to talk about life in Jaffna. It often happened that a third of the way into a lesson, when I was stumbling my way around an unfamiliar grammatical construction, she would interrupt the lesson because a word or a phrase would remind her of something that she believed

¹Historical figures honoured in the pageant included the Tamil poetess-saint Auvaiyar; Tiruvallavar, author of the Tamil literary work *Tirukkural*; Kannaki, heroine of the Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram*, who is upheld as a model of virtue because of her chastity and self-sacrifice; and Sri Arumuga Navalar and Swami Vipulandandhar, who were leaders in the Hindu Reformation movement and championed the cause of Saivism (Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec 1989).

could be useful to my understanding of Tamil culture. She eventually had me study from a standard children's Tamil textbook from Sri Lanka, because it contained many parables and folk tales. Later, when the language lessons ended, Shakti assisted me with the content analysis and translation of the local Tamil language publications. Her primary roles, however, were (and continue to be) research director, life-manager, and "second mother" to me.

Through these three individuals, I was introduced to the Tamil community and by the fall of 1989, my fieldwork was well under way. I was visiting people in their homes or having them visit mine, participating in family celebrations such as birthday parties, weddings, and celebrations of menarche (*cāmarttiyakaliyāṇam*), visiting the local community centres, the restaurant and grocery stores (where I would purchase the latest local publications), going to temple, participating in celebrations of the annual Hindu festivals, and attending the many *kalai viḷā* or evening "cultural" programmes. In short, I was frequenting the places and events where culture is "produced." I was meeting the heads and executive members of various community associations, the artists who write and produce dramas, and the women and men who teach children and adults about Hinduism and other aspects of Tamil culture. In other words, I was meeting the people who "produce" culture. It was about six months into the fieldwork process when I realized that I was being

directed toward "culture" in its "authenticated" sense -- culture as classical Tamil dance, music, drama, and literature; that I was being introduced to people who were considered to be experts on these matters; and that I was being informed about and encouraged to attend places and events where culture in this "authenticated" sense was occurring.

This raised a serious dilemma for me. On one hand, I felt that to follow their suggestions meant that I would be doing outmoded anthropology, focusing purely on "ritual," and ignoring the lessons of Scott (1990), Comaroff (1985), Keesing (1992), and others who have taught that it is in the realm of "everyday" culture that relations of power are played out. On the other hand, this was not a "naive" population -- I was being consciously directed by people who were using anthropological notions of "culture" to reconstruct their own identity, and, as an anthropologist, I was expected to work hard at documenting their concerns, the difficulties they faced, and the goals they set, for maintaining Tamil cultural identity in Canada. Eventually I realized that what I was doing was atypical, but it was postmodernist anthropology. Rather than focusing on a unified Tamil voice, eliciting unconscious and unspoken understandings of culture in order to gain information about local ideologies of culture from an "innocent" population, I was being taught by a group of individuals who were already

consciously and actively involved with the very same topic.

Once I understood that the way that my fieldwork was being orchestrated from within the Tamil community, rather than constraining my collection of "data," was my "data," I began to pay serious attention to the work and ideas of the culture keepers within the community. I continued my research with this framework in mind, listening to the direction given me by the culture keepers, attending the events and places where "culture" happens, and learning about the goals and methods of those working to make culture "happen."

In the final two months of fieldwork, I conducted interviews with ten people with whom I had become particularly close. These people were concerned with and actively involved in the preservation and promotion of Tamil culture. All but one were men, since it tends to be men who fill this role. They included five heads of community organizations, an independent "social worker" (someone who does interpretation and translation in the community), a hospital translator, and three people who were involved with various community organizations. The interviews were unstructured and open-ended, conducted in English. I asked about each person's role and activities within the Tamil community, including their goals for promoting and preserving Tamil culture in Canada.

In order to understand more about the ideals and goals

of the culture keepers, I also reviewed the Montreal Tamil-language publications. The newspapers are an important forum within the community for information exchange and presentation of viewpoints, and are widely read. All of the newspapers are made available through the Tamil grocery stores.¹ I was able to obtain copies of most issues of every newspaper published out of Montreal since 1984.² I did a content analysis of these publications, with the help of Shakti, and had articles which addressed or alluded to issues of culture, identity, community politics, or life-style, translated.³

Before turning to a discussion of *kalaccaram* and the way in which my fieldwork was orchestrated from within the Tamil community, I will discuss the institutions and organizations where culture "happens."

¹Some members of the community feel that supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a militant group fighting for a separate Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka, have at times stopped the circulation of publications which take an anti-LTTE stance. Even with this possible censorship, the newspapers apparently reach everyone through the network of social interactions.

²The publications reviewed were: *Tamil Elil*, published by *Onriyam*; *Ilankirru* and *Tamil Oli* which were publications of *Oli* that have now been replaced by *Pārvai*; *Nāyakan*, an independently published newspaper; and *Tāyakam*, which is published out of Toronto but contains a section written by and for the Montreal Tamil community.

³Articles excluded were those dealing with Canadian news, updates on the political situation in Sri Lanka, world news, and excerpts from the Tamil classics.

2.2 Montreal Tamil Community Organizations.

Members of the Tamil community who are actively involved in preserving Tamil culture are most often working through local community associations. By fall of 1988, when I first "entered the field," there were five community organizations -- The Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec (*Onriyam*),¹ *Tamiḷar Oḷi*, The Canada Tamil *Kalāccāra Caṅkam* (The Canada Tamil Cultural Association), *Tēṭakam*, and the World Tamil Movement (WTM). *Onriyam*, *Oḷi*, and the WTM each housed a small library with newspapers from Sri Lanka, and Tamil language books and magazines; *Oḷi* and *Onriyam* held classes in Tamil language and Hinduism for children, and French and English for adults; each centre was publishing Tamil-language community newspapers; both *Onriyam* and the WTM operated telephone news lines for updates on the situation in Sri Lanka and announcements about upcoming events in Montreal; and *Oḷi* had a Tamil-language radio programme. Each centre was responsible for hosting an evening "cultural programme" (*kalai viḷā*) as part of one of the four annual Hindu festivals, and each occasionally held other fund-raising concerts.

As well as these political/cultural organizations, there are two temples in Montreal, and plans under way for a third. In Montreal, regular temple services are held on

¹The Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec is nearly always referred to as "*Onriyam*," which means "meeting place."

Friday evenings. Besides these regular pujas, special occasions call for an *apiṣṭkam*, when the deities receive a ritual bath. Special temple events such as this always close with a large meal, a popular time for socializing. The dominant theology of the Tamils in Montreal is the Saiva Siddhanta system.¹ The first Saiva Hindus of Montreal held their pujas² in the hall of the Hare Krishna Temple of Montreal. In 1984, they moved to the Hindu Mission of Quebec temple, operated by the Punjabi and North Indian Hindus, which the Tamils continue to rent for Friday evening pujas.³ The Saiva Mission was formed in June 1985, and registered in 1986, and caters to the needs of the Sri Lankan Hindus in Quebec, including weddings and other ceremonies which involve a priest, as well as the Friday pujas. The mission also hosts the annual *Poṅkal* festival (a

¹This school of thought places emphasis on the grace of the god Siva, and on the importance of attaining salvation (Shulman 1980). Two of the most revered deities for the Tamils in Montreal are the two sons of Siva, Pillaiyar and Murukan. The typical Saiva marks of three horizontal lines of holy ash on the forehead distinguish Saiva Hindus from Vaishnavas, or worshippers of Vishnu.

²"Puja" is the term for the Hindu worship service. The Tamil spelling (*pūcai*) will not be used here, since "puja" has become relatively well established in the English language. A glossary of Tamil and Sanskrit terms used in this dissertation appears in Appendix C.

³The building itself is a converted Mechanics Union hall. Images of the god Visnu and his various avatars (incarnations) line the walls of the temple hall, and the altar holds life-size marble statues of the deities Krishna and Radha, Lakshmi and Narayana, and Durga. For their services, the Tamils use much smaller god-images, placed on a temporary altar that is set up prior to each service.

harvest festival) in mid-January.

Members of the Saiva Mission plan to construct a new temple, to the god Murukan. Evening cultural programmes have been held since the late 1980s to raise funds for it, and by 1991 enough money was collected to purchase a piece of land on the western part of the island of Montreal. The temple will be constructed in traditional South Indian architectural style, and will be large enough to house a "cultural library" containing books including Tamil classical literature.

A second temple, the Durga temple, was opened in 1990. It is organized and run (and the space rented personally) by one man who was dissatisfied with the workings of the Bellechasse temple.¹ Besides their involvement in these two Tamil-operated temples, some of the Tamil Hindus occasionally take a pilgrimage to a temple in Val Morin, a small town outside of Montreal. Many also visit St. Joseph's Oratory,² and have incorporated St. Joseph into the Hindu pantheon. Approximately five percent of the Tamils in Montreal are Christian. While most of these are Catholic or Anglican, and attend church services in either

¹The temple to Durga is housed in a sewing factory warehouse. It is modelled after a very famous Durga temple located near Jaffna town, where people as far as thirty miles away come for special events. A well-known local Tamil artist did the interior of the temple, modelling it after the original with such precision that it is an exact (smaller) replica.

²This is a very large and famous Catholic shrine.

English or French in the wider community, there are individuals who hold Christian evangelical services in Tamil, in their own homes.

Several support services exist within the Tamil community. These include a Tamil medical clinic, several Tamil-operated grocery stores and video outlets, a Sri Lankan Tamil restaurant, classes in *bhārata nāṭyam* (the classic Indian dance form, which many in the community simply refer to as "Tamil dance"), printing presses catering to the Tamil community, Tamil films shown in two theatres, and video artists specializing in recording special events such as weddings.¹ As well, there are freelance "social workers" who operate independently of the community associations, charging a fee for filling out immigration forms and doing translations in legal offices and hospitals.

As Figure 2.1 (map of Sri Lankan Tamil refugee community organizations in Montreal) illustrates, most of the Tamil community organizations and support services are clustered in two locations on the island of Montreal -- the Côte-des-Neiges area, and the Jean Talon area. Unlike in Toronto, where the Sri Lankan Tamils have created a "Little

¹Other support services, such as marriage brokers and astrologers, are easily found in Toronto but not in Montreal. People performing those tasks in Montreal are often considered to be not as skilled, and are used as a first measure until more expert advise or help is sought in Toronto. Similarly, cooking and sewing for single men are sometimes provided by individual arrangements in Montreal, but in Toronto there are people providing these services in a more organized manner.

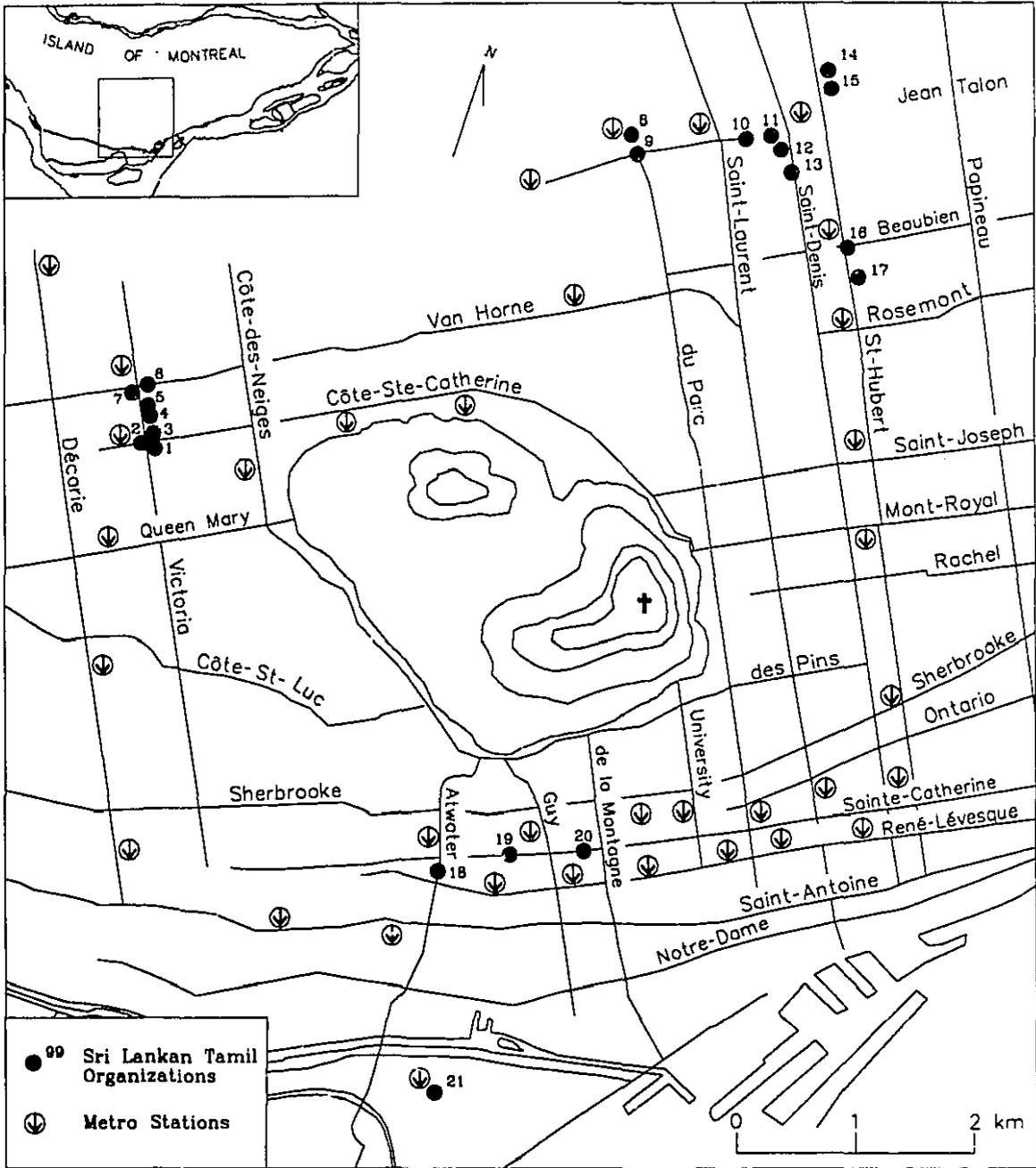


FIGURE 2.1

SRI LANKAN TAMIL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN MONTREAL
(USE WITH TABLE 2.1)

TABLE 2.1

SRI LANKAN TAMIL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN MONTREAL
(Use with Figure 2.1)

| # | organization | metro |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| CULTURAL-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION | | |
| 18 | Onriyam (1985-1987) | Atwater |
| 1 | Onriyam (1987-1990) | Côte Ste. Catherine |
| 6 | Onriyam (1990-1991) | Plamondon |
| 21 | Oḷi (1985-1986) | Charlevoix |
| 20 | Oḷi (1987-1988) | Guy |
| 19 | Oḷi (1989-1990) | Guy |
| 11 | Oḷi (1990-1991) | Jean Talon |
| 6 | World Tamil Movement | Plamondon |
| 2 | Tēṭakam | Côte Ste. Catherine |
| TEMPLES | | |
| 17 | Saiva Mahāsuṅvai | Beaubien |
| 8 | Durga Temple | Parc |
| CLINICS | | |
| 4 | Clinique Médicale Lanka | Côte Ste. Catherine |
| GROCERY STORES, VIDEO OUTLETS | | |
| 3 | U Can Buy | Côte Ste. Catherine |
| 5 | Depanneur Bourret | Côte Ste. Catherine |
| 7 | Marché Victoria | Plamondon |
| 9 | Marché Thurga | Parc |
| 10 | Marché Maruthy | Jean Talon |
| 12 | Marché Trinco | Jean Talon |
| 14 | Marché Ganesa | Jean Talon |
| RESTAURANTS | | |
| 15 | Anantharusuṅvai | Jean Talon |
| THEATRES SHOWING TAMIL FILMS | | |
| 13 | Amala Theatre | Jean Talon |
| 16 | Zenith Theatre | Beaubien |

Eelam" in one area of the city, in Montreal the population is relatively scattered, living around each of the metro (subway) stations beginning at the streets labelled "Queen Mary" and "Rosemont" on the map, and moving northward. The metro stations are used as points of reference by people describing where they live. For instance, a Sri Lankan Tamil who says she or he lives "at" Côte-des-Neiges does not mean the area, but rather the few-block radius around the Côte-des-Neiges metro station. In this way, the metro stations are used to define "villages."

2.3 Kalāccāram.

The Tamils equate culture with "*kalāccāram*," a term which has been in existence since the times of the ancient Tamils. "*Kalai*" means art; "*ācaraṇam*" means practice or usage. Thus, "*kalāccāram*" means classical dance, music, drama, and the concepts contained in the classical literature.¹ This is differentiated from *vaḷakkam*, or custom. According to the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon (1982), *vaḷakkam* means usage, practice, habit, custom; that which is ordinary and common. In the Montreal Tamil community the term *vaḷakkam* is the one generally used to mean "life-style," and encompasses behaviours such as work

¹So, for instance, one community association, the Canada Tamil Cultural Association, which is dedicated to the preservation of Tamil culture through the medium of drama, is the "*Canada Tamil kalāccāra caṅkam*."

and leisure time, preparation and consumption of food, and so on. The *vaḷakkam* is said to be necessarily radically different in Montreal from Sri Lanka, while the *kalāccāram* should, ideally, remain the same in Montreal as it was in Sri Lanka. So, for instance, even though in Montreal one cannot go to temple with a bared upper body, or wash one's feet before entering the temple (part of the *vaḷakkam*), the method of and intent behind praying to the deities should remain the same (part of the *kalāccāram*). Similarly, during the temple celebration that is part of the festival *Mahāsivarāttiri*, some radical changes to the celebration are necessary in order to accommodate the new lifestyle. Instead of fasting, feasting takes place, and instead of an all-night puja, most people leave by one o'clock in the morning, to accommodate those who have to work the next day -- but the "culture" -- the *kalāccāram* -- is said to remain the same.

Members of the community directed me toward studying culture in the sense of *kalāccāram*, which, therefore, meant that I was oriented toward the "authenticated" or classical aspects of culture -- traditional dance, drama and music, the principles contained in the classical *Caṅkam* literature, and the Saiva Hindu methods of worship. As well, I was encouraged to learn about their *vaḷakkam* (life-style), in the sense of people's daily routines. While learning about the lifestyle was seen as useful for me to understand the

socio-economic hardships which they faced as refugees in a new country, it was also considered necessary for me to understand the difficulties of maintaining proper *kalāccāram* in the context of the altered lifestyle in Montreal.

A great emphasis was placed on my observation of and participation in the annual Saivite Hindu festivals -- *Putāṅṅu* (a new year celebration), *Navarāttiri* (or the festival of the "nine nights"), *Tai poṅkal* (a harvest festival), and *Mahāsivarāttiri* (a solemn occasion observing the god Siva). Depending on the festival, and with slight variations from year to year, these celebrations took place in the temple and/or the home, and invariably concluded with a *kalai vilā*, or evening cultural programme. The *kalai vilā* are evening concerts featuring performances of *bhārata nāṭyam*, Tamil folk dances, dramas by both children and adults depicting scenes from the classical Tamil literature, comedy skits, and music. Besides the *kalai vilā* which were part of the annual festivals, many other fund-raising concerts were held by community associations, and were considered an ideal way for me to observe Tamil culture. I was also urged to attend private family life-transition ceremonies including birthdays, weddings, and *cāmarttiyakaliyāṅams*, or ceremonies marking menarche.

I was told that to really understand Tamil culture, I must read the Tamil literary classics, which I did. I was cautioned to read a wide variety of anthropology books and

not just rely on the work of one or two people. One of my friends who had reviewed some of the anthropology books on Tamil culture which I was using was quite concerned that I would get the wrong idea about their culture, feeling that the studies were based on the views of villagers, who were not really knowledgeable about, and certainly not experts on, Tamil culture (in the sense of *kalāccāram*).¹ There was also a concern that the anthropologists in general had focused too much on sexuality ("The *sivaliṅkam* is a model, so they think everything else is based on it").²

Just as I was encouraged to maintain my focus on the "culture" of the Tamils, I was firmly informed when something I was interested in did not fall under the category of "culture." For instance, once when I was watching a performance of modern dance during one of the evening stage programmes (*kalai viḷā*), one friend informed me that this was not Tamil culture, but was "Ceylon pop," influenced by the West, and that I should pay more attention to items such as *bhārata nāṭyam*, the classical South Indian dance form. When I pointed out that most of the audience appeared to be really enjoying the "pop" music, and that during the *bhārata nāṭyam* there had been a noticeable

¹The books included Wadley (1980), Trawick (1978), and Daniel (1984).

²Interestingly, the fact that so many of my anthropology books on South Asia dealt with sexuality was seen as a reflection of the "Western" culture where people are obsessed with sex.

movement out of the auditorium, he explained that this was the fault of Western-influenced singers and film stars -- they want to make a hit record, or a film that sells well, so they put in this "pop" music -- but this is not Tamil culture, and hence I would do well to ignore it.

Similarly, when I tried on various occasions to get more information about the comedy skits that are part of many evening stage programmes, I was told that these do not have any "deep meaning" and are not worthy of attention.

The following conversation illustrates this:

(FB): I'm interested in hearing more about that play 'Welcome to Canada.'¹

(Natarajah): Oh, that is comedy. Comedy, just to, you know, make the people laugh.

(FB): Who was the person who did that?

(Natarajah): I know the boy, he sometimes writes jokes, drama. It doesn't have deep meaning. It is called 'Welcome to Canada,' and it is a humorous play, where the father comes to see the son.

(Talaivar): Then the father doesn't know English, right? He's a village man, so if he comes to Canada, what he is facing here -- the immigration officer will ask something, he will say something, it makes you laugh, you know. It's a humorous sketch. Then he finds that his son went with a Canadian girlfriend, so that he could not come to meet his father when he arrived. Humour, you know.

(Natarajah): It's for the jokes.

¹The title is the same as that of the Canadian National Film Board's film on the "lifeboat Tamils," but the play was written before the film was released, and bears no relation to it.

(FB): I'm interested in that --

(Talaivar): Yes, but it was just humour. Now, say, someone dials the son's number and the answer on the phone is a human voice, and the number has been changed, so it is the operator who has come on and the father says "Say, there's a girl talking" [we all laugh]. That sort of thing. It's humour. There's no deep meaning.

(FB): Are there many other people doing plays besides your group, then? For instance, there was that fellow who did the humorous play, are there many people doing the same thing?

(Talaivar): Yes, but you know, that has no meaning, but to make people laugh. Really.¹

The conversation then switched back to the discussion of the re-enactments of the classic Tamil literary texts, which Natarajah's drama group focuses on in order to teach the children about their Tamil culture.

Similarly when, in the context of a Tamil language lesson with Shakti, I was attempting to explain in Tamil what I enjoyed most about a *kalai vilā* I had recently attended, I spoke of the play "Two-Way," another humorous sketch about a son in Montreal trying to get his father to come to Canada. Like Talaivar and Natarajah, Shakti emphasized to me that these plays have "no real plot anyway," and are just a way to get people to laugh for the moment -- she encouraged me instead to talk about a drama which I had seen at the evening programme, which depicted

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes in this thesis were originally in English. In some cases, they have been altered slightly to correct for mistakes in the English language.

the story of the Tamil saint-poet Auvaiyar and her encounter with the God Murukan.

That Tamil culture (*kalāccāram*) can be the object of discussion and analysis by scholars -- both Tamil and foreign -- is not new to the Tamils. An International Tamil Research Conference is held every four years, in different centres around the world. This conference was begun in the early 1960s in the context of Dravidian nationalism in India.¹ According to Cutler, the conference is based primarily on the notion of a distinctive Dravidian, as opposed to Aryan, race, and the papers chosen by the selection committee are those that emphasize relationships between Tamil and other non-Aryan languages and peoples (Cutler 1983:286).

A member of the World Tamil Movement in Montreal told me about the Tamil Research Conference in the context of a discussion of the emergence of militant groups in Sri Lanka. According to him, it was during the conference in 1972 in Jaffna that one of the major riots was sparked, when the Sinhalese police stormed in and killed eleven people. This event, he claims, was indicative of the suppression of Tamil language and culture by the Sinhalese, and marked the beginnings of militant Tamil action.

The *Onriyam* Tamil Women's group had honoured the

¹The importance of Dravidian nationalism to Tamil cultural identity in Canada will be discussed in Chapter Three.

founder and president of the first of these conferences, Reverend Father Thaninayagam, in the pageant celebrating the history of Tamil culture (discussed above). In the biography about him in the programme accompanying the pageant it was noted that he was a "true lover of Tamil and a great Tamil scholar," who did "much research at Annamalai University in South India and also fought for the rights of the Tamils in Sri Lanka" (Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec 1989).

For the Tamil culture keepers in Montreal, the possibility of hosting one of the Tamil research conferences is talked about often, and is seen to be the epitome of honouring the greatness of Tamil language and culture.

2.4 Paṇpaṭu.

The term *paṇpaṭu* also means culture, and refers to what one "has" if one is knowledgeable about *kalāccāram*. The term was coined in 1937 by a Tamil writer, T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, and came into vogue in the renaissance of Tamil language and literature that was part of the Dravidian movement in India (Mahadevan 1981:18).¹ In *Caṅkam* literature, the suffix "paṭu" was used to mean universal discipline; duty, conduct, sweetness; value; and justice. The words *paṇpuṭaimai* and *paṇpu* were used to denote cultural excellence (Ibid.). The University of

¹This will be discussed further in Chapter III.

Madras Tamil Lexicon (1982) states that the term *paṇpaṭu* means: (1) to become refined or reformed; (2) to be suitable for tillage, as land; (3) to be obedient, submissive; (4) to help, serve.

The term *paṇpaṭu* was explained to me by one of the Montreal Tamils as meaning "cultured" or "well-bred," and that unlike *kalāccāram*, *paṇpaṭu* is something in a person's nature -- a person can only become "cultured," in this sense, after several generations of "good breeding." It is related to, but not synonymous with, caste, because generally people who are cultured are from the higher castes, and they marry their own kind. However, one could also become cultured in only a few generations with sufficient good education, because through education the character can be "polished" sufficiently that the undesirable elements are "rooted out." In Montreal, some people are starting to rise above their families in Sri Lanka in terms of social status, because they are receiving the education and the wealth to make them "cultured."

In Sri Lanka, caste boundaries are still important, with rules of endogamy and exchange of food products¹ based on caste divisions (Pfaffenberger 1982). In Montreal, where the caste status is difficult to discern but the economic status is highly visible, it is possible to marry one's son

¹For instance, at a wedding, those who are of a higher caste than the families of the married couple would refuse to eat the meal afterward.

or daughter off to someone who appears to be of equally "good breeding" (*paṇpaṭu*) without realizing that they are of a very low caste. The problem is complicated by the fact that many of the young people's parents are not in Canada to arrange marriages for them. In cases where the family is separated geographically or the parents are deceased, the usual practice is for a sister or brother to take the initiative. If there is no one to do this, then the person has to find a partner by him- or herself, acting through a marriage broker. It is of utmost importance that a marriage should take place between people within the same caste, economic background, and social status.¹ In Canada, it continues to be important to have an "appropriate" marriage partner, because even if the husband and wife of a "mixed" marriage are happy, it will be the families of the couple who will bear the brunt of it, as this story illustrates:

There was a man who was very well educated. He died, leaving four unmarried daughters. The eldest was about fifteen, and the other three were close behind in age. Having one daughter was bad enough, in terms of paying the dowry, but four was very difficult for the widow to manage. There was a man in his thirties, who was a doctor with a private practice and a huge palatial house, but who was from a mixed family [Tamil with the blood of Burghers, English, or Sinhalese], and also of low class. That man wanted a Jaffna bride from a good family. And the widow decided to give the

¹An example given to me to explain the importance of matching backgrounds was that a girl from a large town and from a family of educators would not be able to marry someone from a fishing village -- she would not be used to the lifestyle, and even the smell of the fish would make her sick.

eldest daughter away to this man, hoping that she could help the other daughters in a better way later on. The next daughter remained unmarried for a very long time, and then married in her late thirties. Her husband got involved in an accident and lost his sight, and the second daughter led a miserable existence. The third girl married a Sinhalese man. The fourth girl remained unmarried for a very long time, but eventually married a poor doctor, half Tamil and half Sinhalese. Eventually the husband of the eldest daughter [the doctor] left her because she was having an affair with someone closer to her own age.

So this is what happens when you take the wrong step [i.e., inappropriate marriage], especially with the eldest girl. But now [in Canada] the whole world has been turned upside down, and one doesn't know what to do.

Just as I was urged toward a certain understanding of what "culture" is and how I should be studying it, so too there were clear notions about who in the community were experts on culture and actively working to promote and preserve it. These people produce the *kalai vilā*, are on the executive of community associations, teach the children Tamil language, religion, and culture, and are called on to speak about Tamil culture to Canadians who request it. They are educated, often artistic, are able to write and speak eloquently in Tamil, have a working knowledge or better of English, are knowledgeable about Tamil language and culture and are concerned about passing this information on in some way to both the children of the community and to interested Canadians. These culture keepers are well known to any Sri Lankan Tamil who is even slightly knowledgeable about the people and events within the community.

Montreal is said to have a scarcity of people knowledgeable about culture and interested in passing this information on to the children or to interested Canadians. This is claimed to be because many of the refugees who entered Canada are young men who are not highly educated and who are more interested in making money and integrating to Canadian society, rather than reflecting on the future of Tamil culture. Many of the educated, English-speaking people leave for Toronto; and those who stay in Montreal and are concerned with the preservation of Tamil culture are usually working at full-time jobs and unable to be involved to a great extent in community efforts to safeguard the Tamil language and culture. Those who are involved are self-professed to be "the best of a bad lot."

In places like this [Montreal] they have to choose the best out of a bad lot. Sometimes you musn't think that these are the so-called "leaders" -- there are plenty of others who are far better qualified in every way, but they prefer to keep out of all this, so the choice is limited to two or three who have spare time (Shakti, in response to me using the term "leader").

Often the culture keepers who are involved in the community associations are recruited by association members who have targeted them as having the knowledge and skills necessary to promote Tamil culture both to the children of the community and to interested Canadians. This is reflected in Shakti's story about how she became the head of

the Onriyam women's group:

I came here in January of 1987, and my sister introduced us to Father Joseph. In fact we spent the first few days in Montreal at his place, he was supposed to show us how to set about applying for immigration, having the medical exam, and so on. That's how we came to know him. Later we got this apartment and moved here, and to return their hospitality we invited them to dinner one day. The whole family came, and we were discussing about politics and things, and that at that stage he realized that I could be useful in some way.

Then, one fine day there was a telephone call to say we want you to come and attend a meeting. So, although it was cold and I was unable to get about, I went, in January. They had a meeting with a few men, who he introduced as members of Onriyam, committee members. So they had a meeting and then we spoke of starting a women's group, an organization. So I had nothing to do and I said, yes, I wouldn't mind doing that. And it was planned that there would be another meeting the next week or something, and we would invite women of the area and have an election, eventually with a head. So it was soon after that, I don't know how long after that, I went there, and we had fifteen or twenty women, plus all these committee members from Onriyam....

In the meantime, I had met a cousin of mine. She was visiting us and I asked her to come along. And she did, and they said we should call for nominations as to who should head this women's group. There were two nominations -- someone nominated me, and I nominated my cousin. She's in her sixties, I thought she'd be a good head of the group. And they began voting. She had only one vote, that was mine, and all the others -- I think it was pre-planned -- they voted for me (Shakti).

Talaivar's involvement in Onriyam also came about through recruitment:

(Talaivar): I went to these associations just to see the library and how they operate and all that, and I got interested, and they, the members there, had identified me and they wanted my services for their associations. Onriyam and the Hindu Saiva Mission. So, with Onriyam, I said well I don't want to be involved in any outside activities or

politics, things like that -- I don't like them. So I said I'll be able to help your association in some form. And they said they were looking for an administrative secretary and I could fit in there, and I said yes. So I was working there.

(FB): And when was that?

(Talaivar): That was, um, somewhere around February 1988. That's the time you came there. So, I was working there as administrative secretary, attending to all of the official functions of the association. In the sense of, you know, later the administration of the office, maintaining the library, and other functions. So somewhere in August of 1988 I was elected president to the Saiva Mission. That was only for one year, really. And they wanted me to continue but due to lack of time and other activities I did not. But my services were always available. And whenever they wanted anything, any advice, they would contact me, and I would oblige.

2.5 The Observed and the Observers.

I also was considered to be an emerging expert on Tamil culture, and my Ph.D. research was seen by the culture keepers as a convenient way to facilitate their own efforts to pass on information to future generations in Canada and to inform Canadians about who the Tamils are.¹

I was held up as an example to the Tamil children in Montreal. The fact that I spoke "pure" Tamil² and could

¹This desire to inform Canadians about just "who" the Tamils are arose out of the feeling that many Canadians did not want to have refugees in Canada, particularly in the wake of the media coverage of the "lifeboat Tamils," to be discussed in Chapter Four.

²Tamil is a diglossic language, with a literary form and a spoken form which are differentiated structurally as well as functionally (Karunakaran 1978:8). The literary form, which is closest to written Tamil and is free of "Northern" letters, is that which is known as "pure" Tamil.

also read and write the language, meant that I took the Tamil language and culture seriously, and I was encouraged to use the "pure" form rather than to speak colloquially.¹ As a scholar of Tamil culture, I confirmed the beauty and worth of Tamil culture (since I had chosen it over any other) and legitimized the importance of preserving it in Canada. Using me as an example, parents were able to show their children that even Canadians are interested in Tamil culture, so that the children would realize the value in learning Tamil language and culture. One man who asked to do an interview with me for a Toronto Tamil-language magazine explained it like this:

When another man, another race, another community is trying to find out some things which are beautiful and which should be followed [in Tamil culture] they [Tamils] will be thinking oh, we ourselves are not knowing this. They will be ashamed of it.

Finally, since I was considered to be an emerging

The Tamil language in its "pure" form is an emblem for Tamil culture and for Dravidian nationalism in India, as well as for Tamil resistance against Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka.

¹The "performance" of my use of Tamil language thus tended to be highlighted at the expense of the content of what I was saying. I did not use Tamil as my principle means of communication with members of the community -- I spoke English with those who spoke it well and "Engframil" with almost everyone else, which, depending on the age of the person I was speaking to, would require different emphases on either English, French, or Tamil. My six-week trip to India in the summer of 1990 was also seen as something of utmost importance, since it confirmed my seriousness in wanting to learn about Tamil culture.

authority on Tamil culture, the resources that I had access to and information I had gathered about Tamil culture were occasionally used by the culture keepers. For instance on two separate occasions, when articles on Tamil religion and Tamil culture were being written by members of the community, I was asked to select and provide some books on the topic.

My research, then, was being directed toward a certain interpretation of culture, given by those who were consciously reflecting on their own cultural identity, in order to meet with their own preconceived and ideologically constructed image of Tamil culture that they wanted to have carefully preserved. In short, they were turning me into an authority to create them as the "other." With this framework in mind, I was able to use my fieldwork process as a tool to understanding the personal and political motivations behind local ideologies of culture.

In Chapter Three, I will turn to the historical context of symbols of Tamil cultural identity, in order to understand why and how certain aspects of everyday life are being promoted as "authenticated" Tamil culture by the culture keepers.

CHAPTER THREE: SRI LANKAN LEGENDS

In understanding why and how an "authenticated" image of Tamil culture is being promoted and preserved by Tamil culture keepers in Montreal, the historical context of previous affirmations of cultural identity must be brought to the forefront of the analysis, since present-day cultural identity is developed from internalized knowledge re-worked in new ways (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:21). In this chapter I examine the historical context of symbols of Tamil cultural identity, focusing on the 450 years of European colonialism in Sri Lanka, the Dravidian movement in India, and Tamil resistance to Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka.

3.1 Brief Overview of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, is an island to the southeast of India, with an ethnically pluralistic population. The Sinhalese constitute about 74 percent of the population, their language belongs to the Indo-European

family, and the majority of them are Buddhists.¹ They believe that their ancestors came to Sri Lanka from northern India in about 500 BC (Kemper 1991:20). The "Ceylon Tamils,"² who consider themselves indigenous to Sri Lanka, comprise twelve percent of the population. Their migration from South India began in the early centuries AD, and continued until the fifteenth century (Tambiah 1986:4). The Indian Tamils make up about 5.6 percent of the population, and were brought from South India to Sri Lanka by the British, from 1825 onwards, to work on the tea plantations of the central highland area of the island. The Tamil language is Dravidian,³ and the majority of Tamils are Hindu.⁴ Despite differences in language and religion, the Sinhalese and Tamils share many parallel features of traditional caste, kinship, popular religious cults, and so on (Tambiah 1986:5).

Although the Tamils are the majority ethnic group in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, nearly half of the Tamil

¹The remainder are Christians, among whom the Roman Catholics dominate. They are principally found among the coastal fishing villages (Tambiah 1986:5).

²The term "Ceylon Tamils" is commonly used to refer to the indigenous Tamils of Sri Lanka; the "Indian Tamils" are those who were brought by the British from South India to work on the rubber and tea plantations.

³Other Dravidian languages include Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam.

⁴As with the Sinhalese, the Tamils who are not Hindu are Christians, and are mainly living in the coastal fishing villages.

population live in areas of Sinhalese dominance. For the Ceylon Tamils, this is due to the necessity of finding employment outside of the Northern and Eastern provinces; for the Indian Tamils, it is because the tea plantations lie in the Sinhalese-dominated central highland region of the island.

3.2 European Colonialism and the Concept of "Race".

Before the trouble started, the crime rate was low. The Tamils don't believe in violence but now it's a necessity. And now, with all the sacrifices that have been made, we should go for a separate state. Not a complete separation, a certain amount of sovereignty. It is exactly like Quebec in Canada. There is a history of mistrust and deceit and no faith now in any Sri Lankan government. Therefore it is best to separate (excerpt from a conversation with a Montreal Tamil friend).

The conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil populations in Sri Lanka is often presented as the inevitable outcome of centuries of hostility, but in fact modern ethnic identities have been shaped by events that occurred under colonial rule. Sri Lanka was subject to 450 years of European colonization by the Dutch, the Portuguese, and then the British. It was during the early part of British rule in Sri Lanka (1796-1948) that the concept of "race" emerged in Europe and, aided by nineteenth-century Western scholarship on South Asia, was introduced to Sri Lanka (Gunawardena 1990:70). Racial theory held that the world was divided into distinct races or kinds of people,

based on physical characteristics which were supposed to be specific to those groups, and which were interpreted in biological terms. Theories of linguistic affinity developed alongside racial theories, and it was believed that those who spoke similar languages shared a common ancestry and common blood (Gunawardena 1990:70).

In 1819 Friedrich Schlegel used the term "Aryan" to designate one group of people whose languages were thus structurally related. His racial theory, which spoke of a common origin of the non-Semitic people of Europe and India, had many enthusiastic supporters, including George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Max Müller. Hegel hailed the theory of the affinity of the European languages with Sanskrit, comparing it to the discovery of a continent, since it revealed, he believed, the historic relationship between the German and Indian peoples (Gunawardena 1990:70). Max Müller's Lectures on the Science of Language (1861), in which he classified the idioms spoken in Iceland and Ceylon as belonging to the cognate dialects of the Aryan family of languages, had a decisive influence over the Sri Lankan literati (Gunawardena 1990:72). "The Aryan theory provided a section of the colonial peoples of South Asia with a prestigious 'pedigree': it elevated them to the rank of the kinsmen of their rulers, even though the relationship was a distant and tenuous one" (Gunawardena 1990:73).

Robert Caldwell's study of the comparative grammar of

South Indian languages was also a major factor behind the hardening of opinion around the Aryan theory in Sri Lanka. It was Caldwell who first used the term "Dravidian" to designate a family of South Indian languages, and who believed that there was no direct affinity between the Sinhala and Tamil languages (Gunawardena 1990:72). The word "Dravidian" was derived by Caldwell and other Western scholars from the Sanskrit word "*Dramida*" or "*Dravida*" which was the term used by the non-Tamils to identify Tamil speakers (Pandian 1987:61).

In Europe, exponents of racial theories received strong support from physical anthropology. According to Gunawardena, M.M. Kunte's lecture on Ceylon, delivered in 1879, was one of the most important sources of support. In his lecture, Kunte stated that "there are, properly speaking, representatives of only two races in Ceylon -- Aryans and Tamilians, the former being divided into descendants of Indian and Western Aryans," and then went on to describe the physical differences between the two (cited in Gunawardena 1990:74).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Western theories of linguistic groups and of racism had become firmly intertwined, and linguistic groups were assigned new definitions in terms of physical characteristics which were supposed to be specific to those groups. The Sinhalese and Tamils were now labelled as different races by colonial

administrators and by Sri Lankans, and different languages, religions, customs, and clothes were taken in various combinations as markers of difference (Gunawardena 1990, Nissan and Stirrat 1990:27).

It was under British rule, when communal representation provided the basis for membership of advisory bodies to the government, that "Tamil-ness" and "Sinhala-ness" were firmly established as basic political identities (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:33). At that time, there was a need for a certain number of local English-educated white-collar workers and professionals to fill positions in the British administration. These administrative needs determined the number of Sri Lankans who were educated in government and mission schools, and also determined which segments of the local population would be the primary beneficiaries. As Sri Lankans were gradually admitted to higher levels of colonial government, it was assumed that each section of the population could only be effectively represented by a person of the same race (Spencer 1990b:8).¹ The indigenous Tamils of the north, as well as the Sinhalese from the low-country of the southwest, were the communities to receive these advantages and become the elite of the island (Tambiah

¹Spencer gives the example that, in the 1880s, a move to allow separate representation for Muslims on the legislative council was opposed by a leading Tamil figure who argued that Muslims were really Tamils (since the Muslims of Sri Lanka speak the Tamil language); the Muslims responded with arguments "proving" their Arabian descent (Spencer 1990b:8).

1986:66-67). Tamils were perceived by the Sinhalese to be over-represented in this elite, and were believed to have secured a disproportionate share of public employment in the British-run administration as well as in the legal, medical, and engineering professions.¹ This belief was exacerbated by the fact that the British had settled a number of Tamils of Indian origin in the predominantly Sinhalese areas of the hill country. The Sinhalese, already feeling their identity threatened by their physical proximity to Tamil Nadu in India, perceived a threat to the survival of the Sinhalese race, language, and culture, leading to a surge of Sinhalese nationalism (Phadnis 1990:192).

Under British rule, then, pre-existing differences of language and religion between Sinhalese and Tamils were reinterpreted in a new fashion that emphasized antagonism and hostility instead of tolerance and exchange (Nissan and Stirrat 1990, Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990, Pandian 1987).

3.3 Dravidian Nationalism in India.

The distinction between Dravidian and Aryan races was further solidified through the emergence of South Indian nationalism, which sought to create a unified and unique Dravidian nation in opposition to linguistic and economic domination by the "Aryan" north.

¹Tambiah points out that the disproportionate participation of the Tamils has been exaggerated far more than reality warrants (Tambiah 1986:187).

The Dravidian movement began in the early part of the twentieth century, and is an organized effort among the Tamils to revitalize the Tamil language and culture, introduce social reforms, and attain political autonomy. The hallmark of Dravidian nationalism is vigorous opposition to North India, and is usually understood as being anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindi in nature (Barnett 1974, Arooran 1980, Pandian 1987, Cutler 1983, Phadnis 1990).

During the British period, Brahmins (about three percent of the population), who had long-established and strong literary traditions, were the first to benefit from English education and enter the colonial administration as well as other urban professions, in disproportionately large numbers. The non-Brahmin upper castes perceived a lessening of their social and economic status at that time. It was these non-Brahmin elites who gave expression to a new non-Brahmin political identity, under the wider label of "Dravidians." The non-Brahmin Dravidian identity, urged along by the writings and research of some of the British missionaries, led to the emergence of a Tamil literary renaissance which identified Tamil as the "purest" and most ancient of the Dravidian languages and provided the historical interpretation of the Brahmins as being the Aryan invaders who had subjugated the Dravidians (Barnett 1974:252, Phadnis 1990:135-140).

This anti-"Aryan" stance was exacerbated when, in 1937,

the government in Madras decided to make Hindi a compulsory subject in school, as part of the commitment to make Hindi the official language after independence (Phadnis 1990:138). The non-Brahmin elite considered the imposition of Hindi a calculated Brahmin affront to Tamil nationhood,¹ one which would give the Brahmins even more of an advantage over them. Public reaction was so widespread that the government eventually changed the policy, making Hindi an optional subject, rather than compulsory.

During the post-independence period (1947 and onward), the Dravida Munnetra Kalagam (DMK), or Dravidian Advancement Association, emerged on a secessionist platform as the harbinger of Tamil ethnicity and nationhood (Phadnis 1990:140). As was the case with other globally emerging nationalist movements in the context of independence and the end of colonial rule, the DMK separatist demands hinged on the distinctiveness of the language and culture of their nation. They stressed the values and morality of the ancient Tamils, wrote in "pure" Tamil (avoiding the use of Sanskrit derivatives) and published thousands of books and journals elaborating on the theme of the greatness of Tamil culture and Tamil language (Pandian 1987:65). In

¹The Dravidian movement had been largely a Tamil movement right from its early stages, since most of its leaders were drawn from Tamil-speaking areas. By the 1930s, however, all Telegu leadership had faded out, and the only strong Malayalee leader had died, making the Dravidian movement virtually a Tamil movement (Phadnis 1990:139).

particular, the opposition between Aryan/Hindi/Northernness and Dravidian/Tamil/Southernness was promoted (Phadnis 1990:147).

The rise of Dravidian nationalism in India had, and continues to have, an enormous effect on Tamil resistance to Sinhalese nationalism in Jaffna, particularly in terms of the opposition set up between the concepts of "Dravidian" and "Aryan." By the early 1950s, when the Sri Lankan Tamil Federal Party held its first national convention and called for regional autonomy on the plea that they constitute a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese (cited in Phadnis 1990:194), the combined effects of Sinhalese nationalism and the Dravidian movement in India had led to a specifically Jaffna Tamil identity, and with it emerged Jaffna Tamil nationalism (Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990:118).

3.4 Jaffna Tamil Nationalism.

Jaffna Tamil nationalism, as with other nationalist movements, links language, religion, and culture to national identity, and emerged during the last hundred years or so (Spencer 1990b, Tambiah 1992).

While much has been written about the symbols of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism, and many attempts have been made to "demystify" the myths behind them,¹ little is known

¹See Arasaratnam 1986; Bond 1988; Brow 1988, 1980; Committee for Rational Development 1984; Gombrich 1988; Kapferer 1988a; Kemper 1991; Matthews 1989b; Obeyesekera

about expressions of Jaffna Tamil¹ nationalism.

It is evident, however, that the political rhetoric of the Tamils, like that of the Sinhalese, is dense with historical allusion (Spencer 1990b:3) and that the great Sinhalese epic, the *Mahavamsa*, and its legend of Vijaya, the first king of Sri Lanka, has been used by both Sinhalese and Tamils as part of their nationalist discourse, reinterpreted to suit both claims to rightful supremacy of the island (Kapferer 1988a, Brow 1988, Nissan and Stirrat 1990, Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990).²

The Sinhalese claim that although they were not the first inhabitants of the island (the "Veddas" were the indigenous population) they were the first civilized settlers. They claim to be descended from North Indian Aryan ancestors who spoke an Indo-European language which was eventually transformed into Sinhala (Nissan and Stirrat 1990:2, Kapferer 1988a:34). They also claim that the Sinhalese were entrusted by Buddha to maintain the island of

1984, 1975; Phadnis 1989, 1976; Smith 1978; Spencer 1990b, 1990c; and Tambiah 1992, 1986.

¹The term "Jaffna Tamil" rather than "Sri Lankan Tamil" is used here because, although the "Indian Tamils" were also involved in anti-government movements, and were certainly the target of discrimination by the Sinhalese government, in Sri Lanka they are generally considered to be a group which is distinct from the indigenous ("Jaffna") Tamils.

²The Sinhalese and Tamil understanding of the national past of Sri Lanka as a history of opposed "races" has been facilitated by colonial readings and interpretations of the *Mahavamsa* (Spencer 1990b, Tambiah 1992).

Sri Lanka as the stronghold of his teaching (Brow 1988:316).

The legend of King Vijaya, written down in the Mahavamsa in the fifth century, is central to the political rhetoric of modern Sri Lanka and vital to the self-perception of Sinhalese nationalists that they are Aryans and thus related to the peoples of North India (Kapferer 1988a:34). The legend is treated as fact, and Vijaya is treated as an historical figure. The story is reproduced in school texts and presented as fundamental to Sinhalese cultural identity and to Sinhalese political rights (Kapferer 1988a:35). The Sinhala version of the legend of Prince Vijaya is as follows:

Vijaya is the ancestor of the Sinhalese people. He was an unruly prince, the eldest son of twins, themselves the offspring of a union between a lion and the errant and wandering daughter of the king of Vangu, in India. Vijaya, because of his unruly and destructive behaviour, was banished from India by his father, Sihabahu ('lion-arm'). It is from Sihabahu that the Sinhalese got their name, meaning 'people of the lion.' After various misadventures, Vijaya and seven hundred male companions arrived on the shores of Lanka, on the day of the Buddha's death. When Vijaya and his followers arrived in Lanka, they encountered the Yakkas (demons), whom Vijaya slaughtered with the aid of a demoness, Kuveni, who was his lover.

Vijaya then abandoned Kuveni and established a new order and various settlements in Lanka. He married his men off to women brought from India, and he himself took an Indian princess for his queen, establishing the royal line of Sinhalese kings. In this way, Vijaya was transformed from an unruly prince into a righteous king.

The Buddha had visited the island on a number of occasions, and had announced that in Lanka his teachings should continue. The Sinhalese converted to Buddhism in the third century BC, and from then until the ninth century AD, a great

Sinhala-Buddhist civilization flourished in Sri Lanka.

The Sinhalese civilization was continually under pressure from South Indian Tamil-speaking Hindus. The Tamil king, Elara, ruled Anuradhapura for over forty years in the second century BC, until he was defeated by the heroic Sinhala-Buddhist king, Dutugamunu. Eventually, pressure from the Tamil invaders forced the Sinhalese to retreat southwards. Some of the Tamil invaders of earlier times stayed in Lanka and their descendants form the communities of Tamils in northern and eastern Sri Lanka today. The Tamil communities never, or only rarely, formed separate political entities, but always accepted rule by the Sinhalese kings (adapted from Nissan and Stirrat 1990:20 and Kapferer 1988a:34).

The Tamils share the Sri Lankan origin myth with the Sinhalese, but give a different "slant" to the story. The legend from the Tamil perspective has more than one version, representing different types of nationalist discourse (Kapferer 1988a:34, Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990:116, Nissan and Stirrat 1990:20).

In what Nissan and Stirrat refer to as the "soft" version, it is admitted that the Sinhalese people were settled in Lanka long before the Tamils arrived. But, the Tamils argue, they have lived in Lanka for at least 1,000 years and had formed their own autonomous political units independent of Sinhalese control. Other Tamils, who take a harder line, claim that the original inhabitants of Lanka were really Tamils, that the Sinhalese were originally Tamils who converted to Buddhism and adopted Sinhala, and that much of what Sinhalese people now uphold as monuments of their past greatness was actually produced by Tamils

(Nissan and Stirrat 1990:20).

Hellman-Rajanayagam has examined the historical context of Tamil versions of the origin myth in order to account for the diverging views. She writes that until the 1930s, the Tamils had tried to prove that the Sinhalese were in reality not Aryans, but rather Dravidians in disguise, and thus had no reason to feel superior to the Tamils (Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990:114). By the 1930s and 1940s, however, an argument had gained weight that it was immaterial whether the Sinhalese were Dravidians or not -- the important claim was that the Tamils had been the first people in Sri Lanka, and that everything great and good in Sri Lanka and in Sinhalese culture was by definition originally Tamil (Ibid.). By the late 1960s, academic research on the origins of Tamil settlement in Sri Lanka which did not meet with the orthodox opinion that Sri Lanka was the land of the Sinhalese was subject to criticism, or was silenced, under the hardening government policies for safeguarding Buddhism and the Sinhalese language. This contributed to a Tamil backlash which manifested itself in exaggerated historical claims and the call for a separate Tamil homeland (Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990:114-116).

The story of King Vijaya was told to me often by my Tamil friends in Montreal, in the context of their explanations of Sri Lankan Tamil culture and history. For them, the story is a symbol of Tamil pride and heritage

which has been distorted by the Sinhalese as part of their anti-Tamil campaign. The most common version I heard runs as follows:

(Rajah): You know, Sri Lanka is not a country which belongs to the Sinhalese. In other words, the first rulers of the country were Tamils. The first king of the Sinhalese was Vijaya. He was a prince from Bengal. When he came to Sri Lanka, the Tamils were already there, but they were not called Tamils, they were called Nagas. You know why they were called Nagas? *Naval* is a boat, a fishing boat. Their main employment was fishing. So they were called Nagas. So, Vijaya came and got married to the Queen. She was a Tamil, and she was the ruler at that time. So when she married him, he became the King. When Vijaya came from Bengal, he had with him seven hundred friends, seven hundred thugs, in other words, hooligans. That prince, Vijaya, was not liked by the people or by the King, his father. He was forcibly sent away from his kingdom, so he came to Sri Lanka and landed in Putthalam. Putthalam at the time was a Tamil area. Even now it is in a Tamil area. So he came to Sri Lanka, he married that Queen, and he became the king. After that, he brought seven hundred ladies from Tamil Nadu [he laughs].

(FB): Oh, to marry his seven hundred hooligans.

(Rajah): Yes, and he also brought down a prince from Tamil Nadu who got married. You know, in our textbooks, Sivan means, you know Nathesvaran, our god Nathesvaran? You must have seen him dancing.¹ One of his names is Sivan. That prince's name was also Sivan. There were four or five Sivans [in Sri Lanka]: Perriya² Sivan, Cinna³ Sivan, and so on. Now, in our text books, they have omitted all that. The Sinhalese government has. Because they don't want it. In

¹Nathesvaran is another name for the Hindu god Natarajah, the cosmic dancer, who is often depicted in dance form.

²Perriya means big, or older.

³Cinna means little, or younger.

the Sinhalese [epic] Mahavamsa it is there. But in our students' textbooks, they have not given that.

(FB): They've taken it out?

(Rajah): Yes, yes. Because they don't want the Sinhalese to know Ceylon was ruled by the Tamils first. And the Tamils know that it was ruled by the Tamils first. The one who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka was Devanumbia Tissa. He's a Tamil. He was once king of Sri Lanka. They [the Sinhalese] say Tissa, we say Tissan. The difference is that ours ends in an 'n;' theirs ends in an 'a.' Tissa, Tissan. Now, he became the king, and Buddhism was brought during that time, and everything was in Tamil. But they [the Sinhalese] say he was Sinhalese.

According to another Montreal Tamil friend, it was from the union of Vijaya with the Yakka (demon) Kuveni that the Sinhalese are descended. Although her understanding of the legend is quite different from the above story, she, too, believes that the Sinhalese have rewritten history by claiming that the Tamils only arrived in Sri Lanka "recently." She pointed out that at the time of the Mahabharata there was mention only of Tamils in Sri Lanka, not of Sinhalese. She explained the reasons behind the Sinhalese distortion of early history, describing her own family and friends to illustrate how easily the Tamils were educated, causing Sinhalese jealousy. She said that the Sinhalese are not as hard working, and never learned how to be because they had better land than the Tamils, with plenty of water and good soil. In the Tamil provinces (the Northern and Eastern provinces) the land was poor, and so

the Tamils were forced to learn English and get jobs in engineering, medicine, and so on, which led to jealousy on the part of the Sinhalese.¹ It is for this reason, she claims, that the early history of Sri Lanka and the story of King Vijaya have been distorted by the Sinhalese.

Both the Sinhalese and the Tamils, then, are making use of the same legend in their description of the history of their people. In the Sinhala version of the early history of Sri Lanka, the Tamils were the evil invaders in the third century and later, and continue to encroach on the Sinhalese language and culture; in the Tamil version, the Sinhalese were, and continue to be, making false claims that they are the rightful rulers of the island, destroying the Tamil language and culture in the process. As Nissan and Stirrat (1990:22) point out, however, the two opposing versions of the past share many features. Most importantly, both sides present the past in terms of interaction between opposed entities, Sinhalese and Tamil, and present them as always having been distinct, as they are today.

3.5 The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict.

The current ethnic violence in Sri Lanka is interpreted

¹She went on to a discussion of how the Tamils and Sinhalese used to be good friends, and that the tensions were created in large part by the politicians, a sentiment echoed by my friend Nanda. Nanda added that in this time of crisis, the Sinhalese and Tamils have helped each other out, and that many of the Sinhalese who are coming to Canada as refugees had to flee because they were helping Tamils.

by the Tamils as "ethnocide." They feel that the Sinhalese majority is systematically discriminating against Tamils and destroying Tamil culture. The tension between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority first began to escalate following independence in 1948.¹ At that time, Sinhalese politicians began to use their majority in the newly elected United National Party (UNP) to improve their community's economic and political position. One of the first steps taken was the disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils, under the Citizenship Act of 1948.

In 1951, the Tamil Federal Party (FP) held its first national convention to discuss regional autonomy, on the plea that "the Tamil-speaking people in Ceylon constituted a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood" (cited in Phadnis 1990:194). Around the same time, the Sinhalese Buddhists began to assert their claim that in independent Ceylon, Buddhism and the Sinhalese religion should be accorded their rightful place as the official religion and language (Phadnis 1990:194).

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, tensions between

¹Sources of information for this discussion on the conflict in Sri Lanka are: Arasaratnam 1986; De Silva 1986, 1981; Fernando and Kearney 1979; Goonetilleke 1984; Hennayake 1989; Hoole 1990; Hyndman 1988; Kearney 1989, 1986, 1985, 1978, 1975; Kodikara 1989; Matthews 1989a; McGowan 1992; Pfaffenberger 1988; Phadnis 1989, 1984; Ponnambalam 1983; Schwarz 1983; Shastri 1990; Singer 1992, 1991; Srinivas Iyengar 1983; Sumanadasa 1986; Venkatachalam 1987; Wijesinha 1986; and Wilson 1988, 1974.

the Sinhalese and Tamils escalated dramatically, with the three major sources of conflict being language rights, the standardization of university entrance examinations, and the recolonization of Sinhalese peasants to Tamil-dominated areas.

Language. Prior to the mid-1950s, the two major political parties -- the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) -- had been committed to maintaining the status of both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages. In 1956, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike of the SLFP won a landslide victory on a "Sinhala Only" platform, in a wave of Buddhist nationalism which demanded, amongst other things, that the Sinhala-Buddhist majority should receive its "rightful" share of official employment (Kemper 1991:2).¹ The Sinhala Only law was passed within 24 hours of Bandaranaike's election, making Sinhala the official language of the country in place of English. This led to one of the first instances of rioting between the Sinhalese and Tamils, in the east of the country, and marked the beginning of Tamil frustration at what was felt to be continued discrimination.

Once the SLFP changed its earlier stand on language and promoted Sinhala as the only official language of Sri Lanka,

¹It is interesting to note that in the early stages of his political career Bandaranaike had addressed gatherings only in English. It was only later in his life that he learned Sinhala and switched to the Buddhist religion (Schwarz 1983:6).

the UNP followed suit. The Tamils perceived this shift in language policy as a breach of trust, and the Federal Party (FP) emerged as the voice for the Ceylon Tamils.

Tamils protested so widely against the Sinhala Only policy that, in July of 1957, Tamil was officially recognized as the language of the national minority. Some radical Sinhalese became angered, and riots occurred from May to June of 1958. A state of emergency was declared, and hundreds of Tamils were reported killed.

In 1959, radical Buddhist monks (Bhikkus) assassinated Bandaranaike, claiming that he was not sufficiently concerned with safeguarding Buddhist interests. His widow took over the leadership of the SLFP. By 1960, the Tamils still felt that there had been insufficient progress on access to services in the Tamil language (the 1957 revision to the language law, recognizing Tamil as the official minority language, was regarded as a "dead letter"). The Federal Party (FP) launched a "peaceful" revolution -- setting up its own postal service, for example, -- and once again, a state of emergency was declared.

From 1965 to 1970, the UNP was in power, under Senanayake. He was more sympathetic to the Tamil cause than the SLFP had been, and under his rule some limited language rights were given to the Tamils. Meanwhile, the opposition, under Mrs. Bandaranaike, was combining ideas about Sinhala and Buddhist communalism with Marxist concepts. The result

was that the SLFP joined forces with the Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party, to form the United Front. As a result, by 1970, Mrs. Bandaranaike was back in power, and more receptive to Buddhist demands than her husband had been. She nationalized the schools, and increasingly used the army as a state power.

In 1972, Sri Lanka's new constitution was drawn up, reaffirming Sinhala as the only official language of Sri Lanka and giving Buddhism special status as the religion of the state. At that time, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was formed, initiated by demands from Tamil youths that all Tamil parties unite to become an effective force against Sinhalese domination.

Standardization. Prior to 1960, all university admission examinations had been conducted in English,¹ and the Sinhalese claimed that a disproportionate number of Tamils were being admitted, because many of them had been educated in the English-language medium. In 1971, Bandaranaike introduced the controversial system of standardization for university entrance. Under this system, the credits needed to obtain entrance to university were higher for Tamil applicants than for Sinhalese applicants, in order to weight admission in favour of the majority Sinhalese.

¹In subsequent years, the examinations began to be conducted in Sinhala and Tamil.

The imposition of this system of standardization, combined with the Sinhala Only policy, fuelled a growing anger on the part of the Tamils, who felt that their rights as the largest minority group on the island were being threatened. The issue that finally led the Tamil youth to take up arms against the Sinhalese government was the resettlement of Sinhalese peasants on lands which were considered to be Tamil territory.

Resettlement. By the 1970s, the Tamils were beginning to suspect that the Sinhalese government was using a land settlement policy as an instrument for changing the demographic character of the Tamil-dominated Eastern and Northern provinces, by resettling Sinhalese in the Tamil areas. It was under the auspices of irrigation programmes such as the Mahaveli Dam project that the consistent programme of recolonization by Sinhalese of areas once dominated by Tamils (particularly the Eastern province) was carried out.

Irrigation projects involved a peasant form of cultivation of small farms, run by peasant households and based on traditional technology. These projects were part of the focus of the Sinhalese government to promote a return to an idealized and harmonious society, centred on the tank (reservoir), the temple, and the rice field as the most desirable form of a Sinhala Buddhist national existence (Spencer 1990b:10, Tambiah 1992:127). Irrigation projects,

begun in the 1930s, involved the transplantation of large numbers of peasants, most of whom were Sinhalese, from densely populated areas to the border areas of the north and east. These settlements have been the focus of attacks by Tamil militant groups.¹

These three issues -- language rights, the standardization of university entrance, and the resettlement of Tamil areas -- led to a growing sense by the Tamils that they were being systematically discriminated against by the Sinhalese government. By 1976, there were demands from Tamil youths to call for the establishment of an independent and sovereign state to be named Tamil Eelam, "Eelam" (T̄lam) being the Tamil name for Sri Lanka. Tamil militants formed underground movements, the most prominent of which was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). On the Sinhalese side, the JVP (Janata Vimukti Peramuna), or People's Liberation Front, had been formed in the early 1970s by an organization of Sinhalese militant youths who believed that the government was not acting strongly enough in support of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.

From the mid-1970s until 1987, the conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamils escalated, with the worst riots occurring in 1977, 1981, and 1983. The destruction of

¹Canada, through the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA), has been the largest supplier of aid for the irrigation projects, a fact which led to a major demonstration by Montreal and Toronto Sri Lankan Tamils in Ottawa in 1986.

important Tamil institutions during these riots -- for instance, the burning of the Jaffna public library in 1981 -- was considered by Tamils to be symbolic of the suppression of their culture (Tambiah 1986:20). In response to the perceived assault on Tamil cultural identity, Tamil youths grew even more militant in their efforts to create an independent Tamil nation.

The first of the major riots, in 1977, occurred just after the Tamil United Liberation Front won the elections in the Tamil-dominated districts on a mandate to establish an independent homeland (Eelam). Reports linking Tamil militants to the killing of a Sinhalese policeman started a major riot in which many Tamils were killed and at least 14,000 made homeless, and in April of 1981, 27 Tamil youths were apprehended under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which had been passed in 1979. This set off a chain of events which resulted in some members of the Sinhalese government security forces in the Tamil city of Jaffna burning the market area, the house of a member of Parliament, the TULF headquarters, and the public library.

In 1983, the government introduced emergency regulations which allowed the security forces to bury or cremate the bodies of people shot by them without revealing their identities or carrying out inquests. Soon afterward, thirteen Sinhalese soldiers were killed in Jaffna by members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the largest

of the Tamil militant groups. This attack resulted in a massacre of Tamils. According to Tambiah (1986:21) this riot was different from those which preceded it, in that it appeared to be an organized violent mob at work and indicated prior intent and planning by gangs who, "carrying voter lists and addresses of Tamil owners and occupants of houses, shops, and other property, descended in waves to drive out Tamils, loot and burn their property" (Tambiah 1986:21). As many as 2,000 Tamils were killed in the period between July 24 and August 5, 1983, and more than 100,000 Tamils fled as refugees.

By 1986, the most powerful of the Tamil militant groups -- the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) -- had virtually taken over part of the Jaffna peninsula. In the process it had clashed not only with the Sri Lankan military, but had also disposed of large numbers of the members of some of its rival groups, including the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). By the end of 1986, the Sri Lankan government anticipated that the LTTE would be declaring the establishment of Tamil Eelam. In response, President Jayawardene imposed an economic embargo on Jaffna, began taking stronger military action to win back control of the peninsula, and began negotiating with the Indian government for increased support.

India had been involved in mediatory efforts between

the Sri Lankan government and the militants since about 1983 and, in early 1987, it continued to be the only agency having good relations with both sides (Phadnis 1990:204). In July of 1987, Rajiv Gandhi of India and Sri Lankan president J.R. Jayawardene signed the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Accord, with the hope that Indian involvement would put an end to the Tamil separatist war. The Accord was to provide for recognition of the Northern and Eastern provinces as areas traditionally inhabited by the Tamils, for devolution of powers to provincial councils, and for a ceasefire between Sri Lankan troops and Tamil rebels, with India providing military assistance.

A temporary ceasefire immediately after the signing of the Accord took place, but the efforts of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to drive the Tamil militants out of the Jaffna peninsula nevertheless increased, leading to more bloodshed, with much of the blame being placed on the Indian Army itself. Indiscriminate arrests, torture, and other human rights violations against Tamil civilians by the Indian Army resulted in it being feared even more than the Sri Lankan armed forces had been. Hoole writes that

[f]or the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the tragedy of the Indian action lay in the fact that India, the source of their culture and traditions, a holy place of pilgrimage, had always been held in the most intimate and revered terms. When the Indian Army suddenly started treating the local population as its enemy and to kill and destroy mercilessly, this metamorphosis from friend and protector to aggressor and enemy was undoubtedly the most shocking and psychologically traumatizing

factor of the whole war (Hoole et al. 1990:284).

As a result of the violent form which Indian intervention took, both the Sinhalese JVP and the Tamil LTTE wanted the Indian Army out. Now, as well as attacking each other and the Sri Lankan Army, they doubled efforts to ensure that rival militant groups on both sides, potentially in support of the Indian Peace Keeping Force, were the target of attacks. The intervention of the Indian Army, then, served to exacerbate factional violence and it was the civilians -- both Tamil and Sinhalese -- who were the victims. The death toll for 1989 alone was estimated to be over 10,000.

Since 1990, when the Indian Army totally withdrew from Sri Lanka, the violence has continued. The LTTE continue to wage war against the Sinhalese government in an effort to create an independent Tamil homeland. Hundreds of thousands of Tamil refugees have fled the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka and, by 1991, approximately 65,000 had sought refuge in Canada.

3.6 Some Key Concepts and Symbols.

You may not be able to spot the differences [between the Sinhalese and the Tamils], but we can. It's not so much the facial features, but the clothes they wear and way they wear them. The Sinhalese all wear the sarong, except at the top level [high caste] -- they wear a white dhoti like us. They have thin moustaches, like the Spanish - - there's a lot of that blood in them. Even the features -- they have hook noses. They talk of

Aryan ancestry but there isn't any -- that's all made up. The low country are dark [-skinned] and the upcountry, lighter, but that's because the Malabars came to settle there and therefore they have that blood. There are so many reasons for their light complexions, but they say it is Aryan (excerpt from a conversation with a Montreal Tamil friend).

For the Tamils in Montreal, the history of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is understood in terms of the interaction between opposed "races," each with a distinctive set of physical characteristics (the Tamils are considered to be darker-skinned and shorter than Sinhalese), language (Tamil versus Sinhala), religion (Hinduism versus Buddhism), and culture. They draw upon the concepts and symbols of Tamil cultural identity, central to contemporary Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, which emerged as part of the revival of the ancient Tamil *Caṅkam*¹ literature.

The poems of the *Caṅkam* literature -- the Eight Anthologies (*Eṭṭuttokai*) and the Ten Long Poems (*Pattuppattu*) -- were classified by their themes as *akam* and *puṇam*. *Akam* refers to "interior," "love," and activities that happen within the four walls of the house, and is

¹The *Caṅkam* literature covers the period prior to 200 AD, and dates back as far as 1000 BC. *Caṅkam* means an academy or fraternity; a seventh-century commentator applied the term to poetry and spoke of three academies of *caṅkams*, lasting 4,440, 3,700, and 1,850 years respectively, with a membership of gods, sages, and kings as poets. All the works of the first *caṅkam* are said to be lost; only the grammar *Tolkāppiyam* remains of the second; the Eight Anthologies (*Eṭṭuttokai*) and the Ten Long Poems (*Pattuppattu*) belong to the third (Ramanujan 1985:x).

associated with things female; *puram* refers to "exterior," "war," and activities outside the home, and is associated with things male. *Akam* and *puram* are related to each other like two sides of a coin, or like the inner palm of a hand and its back, in that one cannot exist without the other (Mahadevan 1981:10,172).

I will argue that an ideological divide within the community over just how Tamil culture should be preserved is a division along *akam/puram* lines. On one side are those who are concerned with safeguarding Tamil culture in Montreal, and focus on women, the home, and the family as the means of doing so. On the other side are those whose efforts are toward the establishment of an independent homeland in Sri Lanka; they are concerned with the civil war in Sri Lanka and with supporting those Tamils who remain behind to fight.¹ Both sides draw routinely upon the concepts and symbols of the *Caṅkam* literature, particularly the equation of "pure women" and "pure Tamil" which is central to contemporary nationalist discourse.

A "pure" woman is one who upholds the principle of "*kaṅpu*." The term *kaṅpu* signifies chastity, but evokes a number of associations including sacrifice, suffering, virtue, morality, justice, and asceticism. Besides signifying faithfulness, it also implies an ability to

¹I am grateful to John Leavitt, who suggested that this divide could be expressed in the idiom of *akam/puram*.

restrain all immodest impulses and having the *cakti*, or sacred power, which is acquired by doing so (Ibid.). *Cakti* is a basic tenet of Hinduism, and refers to the power or energy of the universe which is contained within the mother goddess.

The notions of *karpu* and *cakti* have been a theme in Tamil literature since the first centuries AD (Hart 1973), and grew to prominence during the revival of Tamil literature that was part of the Dravidian renaissance (Pandian 1987). The principle of *karpu* is embodied in Kannaki, the heroine of the Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram* (sometimes translated into English as "The Anklet Story"). The *Cilappatikāram* is the first of five major epics of the Tamils,¹ and is generally considered to have been composed in the second century AD (Subramanyam 1977:vii).

The story is as follows:

Kannaki, the daughter of a rich merchant, is married to Kovalan, son of another rich merchant. Kovalan is enchanted by the dance of Madhavi, a young dancing girl and daughter of a prostitute. The two fall in love, and Kovalan leaves Kannaki to live with Madhavi. A girl is born to them (Manimekalai). When Kovalan suspects (wrongly) that Madhavi is in love with another, he deserts her and returns to Kannaki. He has spent all his wealth and all the jewels of Kannaki on Madhavi. Kannaki, the dutiful Hindu wife that she is, offers him her anklets, which are the only trinkets she has left. Kovalan decides to sell them in Madurai and engage in business there so that he may again acquire riches.

¹The second is *Manimekalai*, the sequel to *Cilappatikāram*, and together they are referred to as the "twin epics."

In Madurai, Kovalan sells one anklet. He is met by a goldsmith who has stolen the queen's anklet. The goldsmith decides to implicate Kovalan in the theft: the goldsmith visits the king and tells him that it is Kovalan who has stolen the anklet.

The king asks for Kovalan to be brought to him to be killed, and he is killed. Kannaki rushes to the court to prove her husband's innocence. As she goes along the city streets crying and challenging, the Sun god replies: 'Your husband is no thief; fire will consume this city which called him a thief.' Kannaki sees the lifeless body of Kovalan, and the body comes to life. Kovalan embraces her and, leaving her there, departs to a celestial abode.

Kannaki meets the king, accuses him of unjustly killing her husband, and shows him her other anklet. Seeing it, the king realizes his injustice and instantly gives up his life, and the queen follows. Kannaki then takes vengeance on the injustice done to her husband: she plucks her left breast and throws it at the city. The god of fire appears and at her command consumes the city. She leaves the city, goes west, and from the top of a hill in the Kongu country, she ascends to the heavens.

The hill tribes in Sera land witness her ascent to the heavens from their hill and report it to the Sera king, who plans to install an image of Kannaki for worship. He takes an expedition to the Himalayas to find a stone with which to carve out the image. Two princes in the north jeer at the Tamils, so he vanquishes them by bringing the stone down on their heads. When the temple is consecrated, a vision of Kannaki appears. She is now fully appeased (based on the versions by Subramanyam 1977 and Arunachalam 1974).

In the prologue, the author says that he wrote the book to uphold three truths: that *dharma*¹ will destroy one who swerves from a just rule; that the great will always

¹*Dharma* means right conduct, in the sense of conforming to one's duty and nature.

celebrate the chastity of woman; and that *karma*¹ will accrue the fruits of one's action (Arunachalam 1974:99).

The concept of *karpu* is also a central theme of the *Rāmāyaṇam* of Kamban.² Like the *Cilappatikāram*, this epic gained prominence during the Dravidian renaissance. The *Rāmāyaṇam* glorifies the concept of *karpu* through the story of Sita, who entered the fire to prove her chastity:

After the death of Ravana, Rama sent Hanuman as his emissary to fetch Sita. Hanuman told her that it was Rama's wish that she should dress and decorate herself before coming to him. When she got there, there was a large crowd around Rama, and he seemed cold and distant toward her. He told her that it is not customary to admit back to the normal married fold a woman who has resided alone in a stranger's house, and said there could be no question of them living together. He left her free to go where she chose. On hearing this, Sita began crying. She ordered Lakshmana [Rama's brother] to light a fire. He did; the flames rose to the height of a tree. Rama made no comment, while Sita approached the fire, prostrated herself before it and said 'O Agni, great god of fire, be my witness' and jumped into the fire. From the heart of the flame rose the god of fire, bearing Sita, and presented her to Rama with words of blessing. Rama, now satisfied that he had established his wife's integrity in the presence of the world, welcomed Sita back in his arms (based on the version by R.K. Narayan 1972:161-162).

¹*Karma* refers to the force generated by a person's actions, which has consequences for one's destiny in the next incarnation.

²Versions of the *Rāmāyaṇam* are found all over South and South East Asia (Richman 1991). The *Rāmāyaṇam* written by Kampan in the eleventh century is the Tamil version of the epic. It varies from other versions in that it incorporates characteristically South Indian material, including the *akam* or inner division of *Caṅkam* poetry, structured around conventionalized landscapes with their associated emotional states (Richman 1991:101).

A third work, the Tirukkural, also extols the virtues of *karpū*. The Tirukkural is considered by many to be the Tamil "Bible." It was composed in the fifth century AD, and is a series of maxims dealing with *aṛam* (the search for righteousness), *poruḷ* (the search for wealth), and *iṅbam* (the search for happiness). It includes information on how to be a chaste wife and good mother, and how not to distract men from doing their manly duties (Lakshmi 1984:3).

The *Caṅkam* literature continues to be drawn on for symbols of cultural identity by Tamil culture keepers in Montreal. Every Tamil male is expected to protect the sacredness of Tamil womanhood, and to safeguard "Mother Tamil." The *akam* side of the ideological divide makes use of the symbol of *karpū*, or the chaste Tamil woman who is confined and protected within the home; the *puṛam* side makes use of the symbol of *Tamiḷ Tāy* or "Mother Tamil" (meaning Eelam) who is protected from the encroaching Sinhalese.

I will return to the discussion of these symbols and their relevance for the reshaping of Tamil culture in Canada in Chapter Seven of this dissertation, and turn now to the Canadian myths and symbols that form the context for reshaping cultural identity in Canada.

CHAPTER FOUR: CANADIAN MYTHS

Canada: Why do you live here? Maybe you were born here. Maybe you weren't. But you live here because either you or your forefathers were drawn to Canada because of what it offers everyone. A nation of personal and political freedom. A nation of many opportunities. A nation that welcomes and respects people of all races, religions, creeds and colours. A nation of cultural diversity. That's why you live here. That's why your neighbour lives here too. And that's why you're a Canadian (federal government message on back cover of the Tamil Eelam Documentation Bulletin, Canada Day issue, 1984).

In any discussion of the (re)shaping of cultural identity in Canada, it must be understood that newcomers to Canada are arriving into a country which has an explicit state policy of multiculturalism -- an official model for how "ethnic others" should fit in with the dominant Anglophone and Francophone charter groups. In this chapter I examine the historical context which gave rise to this policy of multiculturalism, culminating in the Multiculturalism Act of 1988. I show how the symbol of the "ethnic mosaic" -- central to the policy of multiculturalism -- emerged as an integral part of Canadian cultural identity and how this symbol is inextricably connected to Quebec's

call for recognition as a distinct society.

Second, I illustrate how public sentiment toward "Third World" immigration to Canada is also implicated in the formulation of the multiculturalism policy. I examine the history of the Canadian immigration and refugee policies, focusing specifically on policies directed toward the South Asians in Canada, and discuss the media coverage of the "lifeboat Tamils," who entered Canada illegally and became both a symbol of, and target for, an "anti-refugee" backlash, culminating in a hardening of the Canadian refugee determination process.

4.1 The Canadian Multiculturalism Policy.

On July 21, 1988, Canada's Multiculturalism Act became law. The Act declares that it is the policy of the government of Canada to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" (Canada 1991:37). This policy of multiculturalism is central to Canadian government philosophy, and is promoted as an integral part of Canadian identity. Canadians have come to believe that unlike in the United States, where visible minorities become part of an "ethnic melting pot" and ideally blend into mainstream society, in Canada they form an "ethnic mosaic"

and retain their cultural boundaries, which separate them out from other cultural groups and from the regular, "non-ethnic" Canadians.

The Canadian multiculturalism policy was officially introduced by the Trudeau government in 1971, and arose largely in response to events that happened during the 1960s in Quebec (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:366, Burnet 1987:67, Fleras and Elliott 1992:71). Prior to the 1960s, nation building in Canada had been characterized by "anglo-conformity," or the replication of a British type of society in Canada.¹ In the 1960s, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec occurred, against the background of ethnic movements and the birth of new nations globally.

The phrase the "Quiet Revolution" refers to the time of rapid social and economic change which occurred in Quebec in the 1960s, sparked by the death of the long-time premier of the province, Maurice Duplessis, in 1959. The demise of the involvement of the Catholic Church in social services in Quebec is generally accepted as the institutional grounding of the revolution (Handler 1988:85). From the late nineteenth century onward, the Church's reaction to the

¹Although with passage of the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947 (which gave all Canadians equal status with respect to rights and responsibilities of citizenship), and the Canadian Bill of Rights of 1960 (which legally guaranteed fundamental rights of all Canadians, regardless of national origin, colour, religion, or sex [Canada 1987b]), a belief that immigrants shared the same rights as members of the two founding nations began to emerge.

problems of modernization had been to increase its social welfare activities. The Church's goal was "to consolidate or stop the erosion of its hold on the social and cultural life of French Canada," at a time when modernization was creating an ever-growing gap between "religion and civil society" (Handler 1988:84). During the 1930s and 40s, the federal government attempted to intervene in provincial affairs, including social welfare. In Quebec, the Church opposed federal intervention on two grounds: first, it was believed that federal involvement in provincial affairs would weaken not only the power of the Quebec state, but also the power of the Church. Second, it was felt that the "Anglo-Saxon" values of the federal government would be introduced into family and educational institutions which the Church saw as the moral foundations of French-Canadian society (Handler 1988:84). By the 1950s, urbanization and industrialization were increasing in Quebec, and the ability of the Church to recruit clergy was declining. As a result, the Church was forced to seek the aid of the provincial government, effectively passing power from the Church to State (Handler 1988:85).

During the 1960s, French Canadians in Quebec (who began to refer to themselves as "Québécois") became increasingly urbanized and educated, and developed a growing political awareness. Their resentment over exclusion from the central political institutions and symbolic order of Canadian

society was clearly voiced for the first time (Breton 1984).¹

Once the Québécois began to assert nationalist sentiments, relations between them and English Canadians reached a critical turning point. In an effort to cope with the increasing tension between the two groups, the federal government formed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Its mandate was to inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the English and French founding groups (Burnet 1987:67).

Aside from promoting bilingualism in Canada, part of the task of the Royal Commission was to take into account "the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada" and the measures to safeguard that contribution (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, cited in Burnet 1987:68). The Royal Commission devoted the fourth book of its report to the cultural contribution of other ethnic groups, and made numerous suggestions as to how the federal government should deal with these groups (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:366).

¹It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into great detail on nationalism in Quebec. I limit this discussion to nationalism in Quebec only as it applies to the federal policy of multiculturalism. For a detailed discussion of the topic, refer to Handler (1988).

Meanwhile, support for the creation of a sovereign Quebec was growing. In 1967, René Lévesque founded the Mouvement souveraineté-association, and a year later his party merged with other small groups to become the Parti Québécois (PQ), with the goal of establishing Quebec as an independent nation (Handler 1988:9). During the 1970 provincial elections, federal and provincial Liberals tried to associate the Parti Québécois with the "terrorists" held responsible for the October Crisis, in which the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) kidnapped two government officials and killed one of them. Despite this, the PQ won 23 percent of the vote and seven seats in the Quebec legislature.

In 1969, the Official Languages Act was passed, giving the English and French languages equal status as the official languages of Canada. With the demise of anglo-conformity as a central ideological construct (Weinfeld 1981, Burnet and Palmer 1988, Fleras and Elliott 1992), Canadian cultural identity was left in a vacuum. In response, the policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was introduced in October 1971 by the Liberal government of Trudeau.¹

¹Although the policy was announced by the Liberals, it was, and continues to be, supported by Canada's other two major political parties, the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party. This is not true of Canada's recently formed, ultra right-wing Reform Party, which calls for an end to funding for the multicultural programme and for the integration of ethnic cultures into the "national

The 1971 multiculturalism policy had the stated purpose of preserving the language and heritage of all ethnic groups, and removing social obstacles to equality. The policy was to allow for individual freedom as well as national unity, with the understanding that Canada has two official languages, but no one official culture. It thus made Canada officially "multicultural," and financial aid was given to cultural groups for purposes of overcoming barriers to full participation in Canadian society, for cultural interchanges in the interest of national unity, and for assistance in official language training (Canada 1975).

In the two years following the announcement of the multiculturalism policy, steps were taken to ensure its implementation. In 1972, a Minister of State for Multiculturalism was appointed to monitor the implementation of multicultural initiatives within government departments, and a multicultural directorate within the Department of Secretary of State was approved to assist in the implementation of multicultural policies and programmes (Canada 1987b:13). A year later, in May of 1973, the first Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism (later renamed the Canadian Multiculturalism Council) was established, with the mandate to advise the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism. Its members were drawn

culture" (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:372).

from 47 ethnocultural backgrounds,¹ but were chosen "not as spokesmen [sic] for their respective cultural communities" but as individuals, on the basis of their concern "with challenges facing Canadians in the implementation of the multiculturalism policy" (Canada 1975:1). With their guidance, the Department of the Secretary of State began to operate the federal Multicultural Grants Programme (Canada 1987b:13).

The 1971 policy had been created at a time when the "ethnic others" of Canada were largely European immigrants. The policy was geared toward their needs, and focused on cultural preservation through support for festivals and heritage language classes. By the early 1980s, with an increasing number of immigrants and refugees coming from non-European countries, and racism in Canada on the rise, the policy was coming under a great deal of criticism for not responding to issues of racism and human rights.

The Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism responded with a report which attempted to distinguish the "reality" of multiculturalism from the "myth," stating that "multiculturalism in Canada has reached a plateau. We are now beyond the song and dance stage. We must face the challenge of reaching the millions of Canadians who believe the myth, and don't know or understand the reality" (Canada

¹By the mid-1980s, the Council was composed of more than 100 representatives of various ethnic groups (Canada 1987b:13).

1982b:1). Parliament had already passed the Canadian Human Rights Act (in 1977), to provide legal safeguards against discrimination based on race, origin, or religion (Canada 1987b:13). In 1982, equality rights and multiculturalism were enshrined in the new Canadian Constitution and in sections 15 and 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Canada 1990:4). Making further efforts to deal with issues of racism and inequality, in 1984 the House of Commons Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society issued the report entitled "Equality Now!," after holding hearings across the country. That report called for legislation introducing major reforms in the way Canada deals with minorities in the workplace, in the justice system, in the mass media, in education, and in the broader area of social integration (Canada 1984). In keeping with its recommendations, the Employment Equity Act was passed in 1986. All of these measures to improve the status of visible minority immigrants foreshadowed the formulation of a new multiculturalism policy.

On July 21, 1988, Canada's multiculturalism policy was revised, and made law in the Multiculturalism Act. The goals of the new multiculturalism policy were: advancement of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework, equality of opportunity, preservation and enhancement of cultural diversity, elimination of discrimination, establishment of affirmative measures, enhancement of heritage languages, and

support for immigration integration (Canada 1987a). This policy differed significantly from the previous one in that it focused equally on cultural maintenance and social integration within a framework of equal opportunity. It was no longer dealing solely with obvious cultural difference; it was less geared toward folklore and more concerned with issues of racism, justice, and social equality. Furthermore, it was based on a policy of multiculturalism for all Canadians, not just the "ethnic others" (Canada 1991).

The 1988 Act included the provision that federal institutions and agencies would be held accountable in cases where the principles of cultural diversity and social equality were not adequately addressed. To this end, all government agencies, departments, and Crown corporations were expected to provide leadership in advancing Canada's multicultural ideals. In early 1990, the government announced the formation of the Canadian Multicultural Advisory Committee to ensure that the Multiculturalism Act would be properly implemented (Fleras and Elliott 1992:74). Approval to establish a federal Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship in May 1990 completed the restructuring process.¹

¹Since the 1988 Act was passed, the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship has been committed to funding three programmes to which individuals, groups, and institutions may apply: \$7 million goes to fighting discrimination by promoting understanding among Canadians of

Quebec and multiculturalism. All provinces except one -- Newfoundland -- have followed the lead of the federal government and adopted their own form of multiculturalism with their own versions of multiculturalism policies and programmes (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:366, Fleras and Elliott 1992:80).

During the 1970s, Quebec policies regarding cultural communities already had a decidedly different flavour from those of the other provinces. The Quebec policies were balanced between supporting the maintenance of cultural community groups and promoting integration into the wider Francophone milieu through the francization of community institutions and practices (Rosenberg and Jedwab 1992:267).

In 1977, the Parti Québécois passed Bill 101, The Charter of the French Language, in a direct response to the introduction of the federal policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. Multiculturalism angered Quebec nationalists, who saw it as an attack on themselves (Fleras and Elliott 1992:82, Handler 1988:142), since they

different cultural backgrounds, through the programme called "Race Relations and Cross-cultural Understanding"; \$14 million goes to helping new Canadians and minority groups integrate into and participate in Canadian society, through the programme on "Community Support and Participation"; and \$6 million is for research to increase the understanding of multiculturalism, and helps bring various minority artists such as writers, film makers, and performers into the mainstream, through the programme called "Heritage Cultures and Languages" (Canada 1991:25-27). In total, approximately \$27 million, or one dollar per Canadian, is spent on multiculturalism.

would thus become just another "ethnic group." The Charter included programmes to francize businesses, the policy that French must be the language of signs, programmes to teach French to immigrants, and the policy that immigrants to Quebec must attend French-language schools.

At the end of the 1970s, the Parti Québécois had been accused of under-representation of minorities in the civil service. Responding to this accusation, the PQ government called for immigration policies that were explicitly tolerant of minorities (Handler 1988:178). Thus, in April of 1981, the Ministry of Immigration (created in 1968) became the Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration. At that time the ministry defined its policy on cultural communities in the report "Autant de façons d'être Québécois" (Québec 1981). The three main objectives of the government detailed in the report were: (1) to develop cultural communities and ensure the maintenance of their uniqueness; (2) to sensitize Quebec Francophones to the contribution of cultural communities to Quebec's heritage and cultural development; and (3) to facilitate the integration of cultural communities into Quebec society, including the move to assist Allophones¹ in acquiring competence in French to enable them to participate more fully in Quebec society (Québec 1981).

¹The term "Allophone" is used in Quebec to mean those minorities whose first language is neither English nor French.

At that time, the Ministry of Cultural Communities also established the supremacy of French as the language and culture of Quebec (Fleras and Elliott 1992:83). In keeping with this principle, the Ministry continued its mandate to ensure the maintenance and development of the heritage cultures, but was also responsible for ensuring the ongoing links of the Allophone community with the Francophone community.

By 1990, in the wake of the failure to ratify the Meech Lake Accord,¹ the tension between Quebec's own need to affirm a distinctly Québécois society, and the need to provide support for multiculturalism within the wider framework of Canadian society, had become increasingly incompatible. Evidence of lessening support for the principles of multiculturalism in Quebec, in the wake of Meech Lake, is implied in the dwindling funds available to social service organizations involved in immigrant

¹In 1982, The Constitution Act was signed by all provinces except Quebec, which refused to sign unless there was the inclusion of explicit recognition for Quebec's rights as a distinct nation within Canada. A compromise was not reached until April 1987 when the "Meech Lake Accord" was drawn up. It was to formalize Quebec's re-entry into the constitution by making further constitutional amendments which would give Quebec its recognition as a distinct society and allow it to preserve and promote its cultural and linguistic heritage. Many were concerned that a commitment to the distinct society clause would mean disrupting minority multicultural rights and women's equality rights. As Fleras and Elliott point out, the distinct society provision has sharpened the conflict between multiculturalism and biculturalism as competing principles of organization (1992:173-175).

adaptation. At the time of its creation, the Ministry of Cultural Communities had set up six programmes to ensure aid to cultural communities and to the social service organizations involved in immigrant adaptation. Jacob and Blais report that the portion of the budget which had been allocated for these services diminished considerably after 1984-85, and by 1989-90 it was less than it had been in 1981 when the Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration was created (Jacob and Blais 1992:51-60). Similarly, in 1990, the Montreal Catholic School Board proposed a ban on the use of any language but French on school property during classroom hours. The proposal was eventually overturned, but it illustrates how the "Allophone" languages were increasingly viewed as a threat to the maintenance of Quebec's language and culture.

In keeping with the Quebec government's desire to ensure that the integration of new immigrants was directed to the Francophone milieu, its policies used the term "interculturalism," rather than "multiculturalism" (Fleras and Elliott 1992:82). The policy of interculturalism is concerned with the acceptance of, and communication and interaction between, the Allophones and the dominant groups, without implying any intrinsic equality between them (Fleras and Elliott 1992:83).

4.2 Canadian Immigration and Refugee Policies.

The development of the Canadian multiculturalism policy must be understood not only in the context of Quebec's call for recognition as a distinct society, but also in the context of public sentiment toward so-called "Third World" immigrants to Canada. The ways in which the policy emerged and has been transformed over time is inextricably connected with changes to Canadian laws regarding entry of immigrants and refugees from "Third World" countries.

Canada's first Immigration Act was passed in 1896. Before that time, while there had been much "ethnic diversity" among new immigrants to Canada, there was no coherent policy in place regarding immigration from non-European countries (Elliott and Fleras 1990:54-55). The 1896 policy actively promoted immigration from China to supply labourers for work on the railroad, and from Russia (mainly Dukhobours) to work in agriculture (Elliott and Fleras 1990:54-55).

Under the second Immigration Act of 1910, a distinction was made between applicants from "preferred" and "non-preferred" countries, and from then until the Immigration Act of 1952, anyone could be refused entry into Canada on the basis of nationality, citizenship, ethnic group, occupation, class, or geographic area of origin (Hawkins 1972:102).

In the late 1950s there was a downturn in the Canadian

economy, demand for unskilled workers diminished, and the emphasis turned towards procuring skilled workers. In 1967 the "White Paper on Immigration" was formulated, stating that Canadian immigration policies must involve no discrimination by reason of race, colour, or religion, and consequently must be universally applicable. Reflecting the shift from the demand for unskilled to skilled labour, the 1967 Act was based on a points system, with points given for characteristics such as education, health, and skills. Country of origin and "race" were eliminated as criteria for admission.

At the time of this 1967 White Paper, four classes of immigrants were defined: family, independent, entrepreneurs, and refugees. Immigrants could apply under three categories: sponsored, independent, or nominated. Refugees were not treated separately from other immigrants -- the government responded in an ad hoc fashion to each wave of refugees or, alternatively, accepted individuals seeking refuge as immigrants.

Following the 1967 White Paper, an influx of educated economic immigrants from the "Third World" into Canada caused a backlash against visible minority immigrants, especially in Vancouver and Toronto. In response, the government decided yet again to re-examine its immigration policy. In September of 1973 a task force was formed to prepare a Green Paper on immigration policy. The purpose of

the task force was: 1) to inquire into the kind of immigration that Canada wanted, and to identify problems and analyze policy options in those terms; 2) to review the procedures by which immigrants would be recruited; and 3) to review the legal framework within which new policies should operate. A special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons travelled from coast to coast to elicit opinions about a future immigration and refugee policy.¹ The report was submitted in November of 1975.

The resulting Immigration Act of 1976 (passed in 1977 and operational in April of 1978) was designed to link the entry of independent (non-sponsored) immigrants to the specific needs of Canadian employers. The Act has been repeatedly criticized for introducing racism into immigration policy (e.g., Arnopolous 1979, Bolaria and Li 1988, Kanungo 1984). The new Act divided Canada into citizens and landed immigrants. Under the act, all landed immigrants, no matter how long they had been in Canada, could be deported if suspected of "subversive activities" (Arnopolous 1979, Ng and Ramirez 1981, Whitaker 1987).

This 1976 Act distinguished between family class immigrants (whose sponsors must maintain them for ten years), independent class immigrants (who were assigned points, which were accumulated based on factors such as

¹Wood reports that this task force ended up focusing negative attention on "Third World" immigration and its "consequences for national identity" (1978:16).

education, vocational training, experience, personal stability, and having relations in Canada, with a minimum of 70/100 required for acceptance), and refugees. A Refugee Status Advisory Committee was set up to determine the validity of refugee claims. The committee was composed of three government officials -- one from the Department of Immigration and Manpower, one from the Department of External Affairs, and one representative to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Under this new system, the refugee claim would go through a three-stage process of status determination, including: 1) the inquiry, which produced a formal statement and transcript; 2) the commission decision, which was based on the transcript; and 3) an appeal to the Immigration Appeal Board if the decision was negative. Under this system the claimant could not get a full hearing in person, but rather, the commission would see the written transcript from the senior immigration officer and make a decision. In the event of a negative decision, the claimant would not be informed of the reasons why she or he was not accepted.

This 1976 Act differentiated between "Convention refugees" (based on the 1951 UNHCR Convention definition of "refugee" which had been adopted by Canada in 1969) and "designated classes," in order to extend the criteria for refugee admission to include individuals or groups not included within the United Nations Convention definition.

This was seen as a positive step, since people who were still living in the country of persecution could be accepted as refugees.

As Whitaker (1987) points out, however, the creation of a separate category of refugees from designated classes actually added to the already prejudiced policy. He argues that the history of Canadian immigration was one of "Cold War" tactics,¹ and that soon after the 1976 Act was passed, three groups of designated classes emerged (refugees from Indo-China, the Soviet Block, and Latin America), but by far the vast majority admitted were those fleeing from communist countries (Whitaker 1987:294).² Both Dirks (1984) and Whitaker (1987) point out that while Latin American refugees were rarely allowed entry, the Canadian government admitted 60,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and made an appeal to the generous and humanitarian impulses of the Canadian people to sponsor individual refugees.³

¹Whitaker points out that from 1945 to the early 1980s, about eighty percent of the refugees accepted into Canada were fleeing from communist states (1987:294).

²The Act thus gave these claimants a decided advantage over Convention refugees. The numbers of designated class refugees tended to exceed how many Canada actually was willing to accept, so that the numbers accepted were able to fluctuate to match exactly labour market conditions. The point system is fairly subjective and thus worked "well" for this purpose (Kanungo 1984).

³Whereas, in 1987 the government would not welcome many Latin American claimants because they were fleeing the oppression of "our" (i.e., capitalist) side (Whitaker 1987:294).

By the mid-1980s, an estimated 20,000 people were part of a "backlog" of refugee claimants. This slowed down the entire refugee determination system. In the late 1970s, a claim for refugee status took less than a year to process; by the mid-1980s, it was taking three years to complete.¹ In May of 1986, the federal government announced plans to begin cleaning up the backlog. Interim measures were introduced, whereby people from countries which were classified as unsafe (including Sri Lanka) were dealt with under a special programme. All those who had claimed refugee status before May 21, 1986 received top processing priority, followed by those who had arrived after May 21 and were from countries not on the list of "unsafe" countries (in other words, countries to which Canada would deport people). The refugee claims of those from the unsafe countries, including Sri Lanka, who had arrived after May 21, 1986, were dealt with last. They were given ministerial permits that allowed them to stay and work in Canada while they were waiting for their claims to be processed.

The introduction of this procedure of giving ministerial permits to refugees fuelled an already angry public outcry against the entry of "Third World" refugees to Canada. It was the arrival of 152 Sri Lankan Tamils off the east coast of Canada, who were given permission to stay and

¹"Backlog mires 20,000 seeking refugee status," Montreal Gazette March 25, 1988.

granted ministerial permits, that led directly to proposals to create a harsher refugee determination process. Before elaborating on the story of the "lifeboat Tamils," I will turn briefly to a discussion of the historical context of anti-South Asian sentiment in Canada.

4.3 South Asians in the Canadian Mosaic.

During the period of 1900 to 1908 about 5,000 South Asians, mainly Sikhs, arrived in Canada (Buchignani 1979) and settled mainly in and around Vancouver. Canadians were far from receptive to these, and other, Asian immigrants. Asians were not allowed to vote in Canada and were not able to join professions such as law and pharmacy. They were required to carry identification cards at all times. In addition to this kind of "institutionalized racism," Asians were subject to various kinds of individual prejudice. Bolaria and Li report that whites refused to sit beside South Asians on trains, that they were called "ragheads," and that they could not attend public events in native dress (Bolaria and Li 1988:148). The Vancouver press at the time featured headlines such as "Hordes of Hungry Hindoos Invade Vancouver City" and "Hindoos a Menace to Women and Children" (Raj 1980, Indra 1979). According to Buchignani and Indra, immigration officers in Vancouver in 1906 also exhibited racist attitudes (Buchignani and Indra 1981).

From 1906 to 1907, anti-Asian hostility was so intense

that during the "anti-Oriental riots" of that time, white exclusionists were on the streets of Vancouver singing "White Canada Forever" (Jensen 1988:62). In January of 1908 "White Canada" slogans were used in election campaigns -- for instance, McBride of the Conservative Party campaigned for premier of British Columbia on an anti-Asian platform (Jensen 1988). Prime Minister Laurier, in response to the anti-Asian hostility, reported that the government could do nothing, but in 1908 he refused to let recent Indian immigrants use the Vancouver drill hall as a refuge, and ordered a boatload of 150 Sikhs to be deported (Ibid.).

In 1908 an order-in-council was passed stating that all immigrants entering Canada through Pacific ports must come by a continuous journey from their point of origin. No such route existed from India. South Asian immigration under the Continuous Journey Order diminished considerably. Whereas from 1907 to 1908, 2,623 Indians had entered Canada, from 1908 to 1909 there were only six, and from 1909 to 1911, fifteen (Jensen 1988:72). Furthermore, during the period of 1908-1947 (the duration of the ban), many South Asians moved south to the United States, so that their numbers in Canada dropped from 5,000 and stabilized at about 1,100. It did not reach 5,000 again until the 1950s (Buchignani 1979).

The Canadian government had not only adopted a discriminatory policy of immigration to restrict the flow, but had adopted a theory to justify such a practice. The

"assimilation argument" (that South Asians should not be admitted because they could not assimilate for reasons such as climactic incompatibility) became the popular rationale for refusing South Asians (Bolaria and Li 1988:146).

In 1947 South Asians were given the right to vote (coincident with the end of British colonial rule in India) and the continuous journey ban was lifted. In 1952 a quota of South Asians eligible to enter Canada was set: 150 from India, 100 from Pakistan, and 50 from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). By 1957, the Indian quota had risen to 300 (Bolaria and Li 1988:148). In the late 1950s, with a downturn in the Canadian economy, the need for unskilled workers diminished and by 1967 the point system (discussed above) came into effect and "race" was theoretically no longer a valid criterion for admission. Between the 1961 and 1976 censuses, the Indo-Canadian population (including Fijians and Ugandans) increased twenty times (Johnston 1984b). Anti-Asian sentiment rose once again, and peaked between 1975 and 1980, with "Paki-bashing" in Toronto and Vancouver becoming a major concern (Walker 1985, Buchignani et al. 1985).¹ While high levels of racism have been reported toward all immigrant groups to Canada during this period of

¹For other studies of racism toward South Asians in Canada, see Henry (1983), Kallen (1982), and Daniels (1981). This increase in anti-South Asian sentiment was also occurring in other countries receiving large numbers of Asian immigrants, such as Britain (e.g., Richmond 1979, Buchignani 1980a).

the mid- to late-1970s (Berry et al. 1980, Canada 1984), there is evidence that "East Indians" were the most disliked (Frideres 1978). Frideres suggests that this is because they represented the greatest potential for economic competition (Ibid.:27).¹

This rise in anti-Asian sentiment was coincident with a decrease in the number of South Asians admitted to Canada. Wood (1978:16) reports that while in 1974 there were 12,868 immigrants from India, in 1975 the number dropped to 10,444, and in 1978 6,733 were admitted.

Into this atmosphere of rising anti-South Asian sentiment, compounded by increasing intolerance for "Third World" refugees by the Canadian public at large, the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees arrived in Canada. The Tamils had begun seeking refugee status in large numbers in 1984, in the wake of the 1983 riots in Sri Lanka, but their arrival into Canada went relatively unnoticed until media coverage of the 152 "lifeboat Tamils" sparked an angry public outcry and fears that Canada was being "invaded" by "illegal aliens."

¹This study was conducted in western Canada (Calgary, Alberta), and Frideres cautions that the findings must be interpreted accordingly. Of all Asian groups, he found that the Japanese Canadians were thought of the most favourably, and suggests that this is because they are not as vocal politically as the Chinese and East Indians (Frideres 1978:27).

4.4 The "Lifeboat" Tamils.

[The 152 Sri Lankans] may be the tip of the iceberg...opening the door to a flood of Third World castaways seeking entry to Canada by turning up on [Canadian] shores....Canada will review its generous refugee policy if it is misused and if there is more of the kind of 'adventure' used by the 152 Sri Lankans (Immigration Minister Benoit Bouchard).¹

On August 12, 1986, the front-page headlines of newspapers across Canada broadcast the first of a series of bizarre stories about 152 Tamil refugees, who had been found adrift in two open lifeboats off the coast of Newfoundland. It was soon suspected that the Tamils were not legitimate refugees, as they claimed to be, but rather were "illegal aliens."² An extensive search by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was begun to track down the "mother ship,"³ and the media warned Canadians that their east coast is "vulnerable to landings."⁴

The initial story about the 152 refugees, based on interviews with passengers and with the president of the Quebec Tamil Eelam Association (Onriyam), was reported in the Canadian media as follows:

¹Cited in "152 refugees 'tip of iceberg' -- Bouchard," Montreal Gazette August 14, 1986, A1.

²"Many 'refugees' simply seeking economic gains: investigator," Montreal Gazette August 14 1986, A1.

³."Blip' may have been mother ship," Toronto Star August 14, 1986, A16.

⁴"East Coast vulnerable to landings," Toronto Globe & Mail August 16, 1986, A4.

On Monday August 11, 1986, two open lifeboats, carrying 152¹ Sri Lankan Tamils, were found 'bobbing' off the coast of Newfoundland. The passengers had been told by the captain of the boat that they were ten kilometres from Montreal when they were set adrift, and were told to steer a course of 350 degrees to reach Montreal. One of the lifeboats was equipped with an outboard motor, but it broke down after the first day. They had with them no food and only a limited supply of water. Only the three women and five children had cabins. The passengers ate rice soup three times a day, used a bucket for a toilet, and slept only with a blanket. The month-long journey had begun on July 7 in Madras, India, at a cost of \$2,210 Canadian per person, raised from savings and by selling jewellery and what little land they had owned. The Tamils were requesting refugee status 'because they are dark-skinned, account for eighteen percent of Sri Lanka's population of sixteen million, and have long accused the light-skinned Sinhalese majority of persecution.' The Tamils want to form a sovereign state.²

In those first newspaper reports, there was already much speculation about whether the Tamils had indeed set out from South India, as they had claimed, or from West Germany.³ The allegations of a German connection first surfaced because some of the refugees had German currency with them, and one passenger had some possessions wrapped in

¹Although initial reports were of 152 passengers, by the following day the number was reported to be 155 passengers.

²Adapted from the following Canadian newspaper accounts: "Sri Lankan refugees will be allowed to remain in Canada, officials say," Montreal Gazette August 13, 1986, A1; "Tamil community in Montreal ready to assist refugees," Toronto Globe & Mail August 13, 1986, A4. Phrases in citation marks are the original phrasing from both accounts.

³"West German link seen in mystery of castaways," Toronto Star August 13, 1986, A1.

German newspapers dated June 25; reports from Hamburg that a boatload of Tamils had left from there were already under investigation by the RCMP. As well, the media reported that Canadian officials were puzzled by the refugees' good condition after five days without food, citing their dry clothing as an example. The Tamils, represented by Nalliah Wijayanathan, denied that there was a connection with Germany and claimed that the goods came from the "black market."

By August 13, two days after the Tamils had arrived, the question was being raised as to whether the Tamils were "legitimate" refugees or "illegal aliens." On August 14, an investigator from the federal Department of Immigration stated that the lifeboat Tamils were "only a small number of hundreds of aliens flocking to Canada every month" and that, while some are fleeing persecution in their homelands, "many more are nothing but economic migrants, who are merely using the refugee claims route to reap socio-economic benefits and prolong their stay wherever they are." He added that while it was too soon to know whether the 152 Sri Lankans were "legitimate" refugees or not, "what is clear is that, generally, Canada receives a high number of bogus refugees originating from Sri Lanka, many of whom live for several years elsewhere and sometimes are granted refugee status in

other countries before arriving here."¹

On August 18, one week after their arrival, the Tamils admitted lying about the origin of their voyage. A news conference was held in Montreal, hosted by the Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec (Onriyam). Wijayanathan Nalliah, spokesman for the group of arrivals, read from a prepared statement, apologizing for the Tamils and asking Canadians for forgiveness and compassion. He stated that they had begun their voyage in Germany, not India, and that they feared being deported to Sri Lanka if they told the truth. He said that they had left Germany because they were not granted refugee status there, were forced to live in camps, were not allowed to work, and had their movements restricted.

The story as reported by the media was then re-told, with a new twist to it: the Tamils had boarded a ship from a drydock in Strade, Germany, the evening of July 27, and sailed the next morning. On August 9, the refugees were led into two small lifeboats, with two barrels of water and a can of gasoline for fuel. They were spotted two days later by a fishing boat.²

¹"152 refugees 'tip of iceberg' -- Bouchard," Montreal Gazette August 14, 1986, A1.

²It should be noted that the only reference that I came across to the fact that the refugees' "adventure" might well have ended with tragic consequences was in an article published the Tamil Times of London, England ("Now, Tamils on boat to Canada," Tamil Times (London) September 1986).

Except for the point of departure, the rest of the story remained similar to the original, but the details were more voyeuristic. It was reported that the living conditions aboard the boat were inhumane. Except for three families with children who were given small cabins, the passengers were crammed below deck in the cargo hold, which contained one light and no mattresses; they were fed mouldy bread, jam, and soup once daily -- others said they were not given anything; they used pails as toilets, which splashed onto the floors and fouled the air. All but two of the passengers had been living in Germany for an average of two years, and the trip cost about \$4,500 Canadian per person. The money was reported to have gone to two Sri Lankans in Germany.¹

A nation-wide poll on attitudes toward refugees, conducted in the wake of the Tamils' arrival, surprised pollsters by the intensity of the backlash against refugees. This attitude was attributed to the fact that the Tamils had lied.² Reflecting the mood that Canada's refugee policy was too "soft,"³ much media attention focused on how the

¹"Refugees can stay even though they lied," Montreal Gazette August 18, 1986, A1.

²"Backlash predictable, but intensity surprises pollsters," Montreal Gazette August 19, 1986, A1.

³The Tamils: Are we a soft touch? Montreal Gazette August 16, 1986, B1.

Tamils were allowed to stay "even though they lied."¹

In February of 1987, the controversy re-surfaced again, as German authorities reported that another boat with Tamil refugees might be sailing to Canada soon.² While this was being investigated by Canadian intelligence officials, the Montreal Gazette featured articles on what had happened with the first boatload of Tamils.³

On July 11, 1987, the front page of the Toronto Globe & Mail featured the headline "Boatload of Tamils reported off coast,"⁴ the Montreal Gazette headline read "Nova Scotia set for more boat people: Mystery surrounds 'refugees'" and "First Tamil refugees remembered."⁵ The Toronto Star's headline was slightly more cautious: "Tamil report fogged by conflicting stories."⁶ On July 12, the "boat people" -- Sikhs, not Tamils -- arrived. The Sikhs never were made the centre of attention in the controversy -- instead, it was once again the original Tamil boat people who made the

¹"Refugees can stay even though they lied," Montreal Gazette August 18, 1986, A1.

²"Bonn warns of plot to ship in 250 more Tamils," Montreal Gazette February 10, 1987, B1.

³"Tamil refugees all found jobs," Montreal Gazette May 2, 1987, A6; "Tamil refugees rebuild lives in peaceful haven," Montreal Gazette June 3, 1987, A5.

⁴Toronto Globe & Mail July 11, 1987, A1.

⁵Montreal Gazette July 13, 1987, A1; Montreal Gazette July 11, 1987, A1.

⁶Toronto Star July 11, 1987, A1.

headlines. Furthermore, whereas the Tamils were referred to as "Tamils," the Sikhs were referred to as "more Asians," or as "East Indians," thus linking them directly with the Tamils as being more "queue jumpers" and "bogus refugees."¹

Two days later, on July 14, 1987, xenophobia increased when it was rumoured that yet another ship was on its way. An article in the Montreal Gazette stated that even though the "boat people" (the 174 Sikhs) had said there was no second ship, Canadian authorities were "taking no chances," and were "continuing to look for the vessel, whether it exists or not."² A few days later it was reported that the oceans were being "combed for new illegals"; that "the naval might of Canada was deployed in the seas off Nova Scotia, scanning the waves for an invading party of alleged bootleg refugees." It was also reported that Benoit Bouchard, the federal Minister responsible for immigration, had said of the mystery boat that "if it is found to be carrying aliens,

¹"Asian boatload sets off furious backlash," Montreal Gazette August 1, 1987, B4.

Also, on May 28, 1988, when the Montreal Gazette reported that "immigration officials are bracing for another flood of refugee claimants -- possibly even another boatload -- over the summer," readers were reminded that "last summer a boatload of 174 Sikh refugee claimants arrived in Nova Scotia, and the summer before a boatload of 152 Tamils was found drifting off the coast of Newfoundland." ("Immigration officials are bracing for another flood of refugee claimants -- possibly even another boatload -- over the summer" Montreal Gazette May 28, 1988, A1).

²"A second ship? Boat people say no," Montreal Gazette July 14, 1987, A1.

all of Canada's powers will be brought to bear to have it returned to its port of origin."¹ According to an article in the Toronto Star, \$3.6 million was spent on hunting refugee ships at that time.² On August 3, the suspect ship turned up in a small English port, with no refugees aboard.³

4.5 Bill C-55: Closing the Doors.

Compared to the welcome that the Indo-Chinese refugees had received in Canada a decade earlier, the Canadian government and the public had quite a different reaction to the arrival of Tamils and Sikhs. Instead of reception committees and adopt-a-refugee programmes, their arrival sparked an intense refugee backlash and led to the introduction of two controversial new Bills which would speed up the refugee determination process, and weed out unwanted "aliens." Bill C-84 gave officials the power to turn back ships up to 40 kilometres offshore if they were deemed to be carrying allegedly bogus refugees, and included tougher laws for refugee "smugglers." Bill C-55 was aimed at curbing abuse of the refugee system by those who claim to

¹"Oceans combed for new illegals," Montreal Gazette August 1, 1987, A1.

²"\$3.6 million spent hunting refugee ships," Toronto Star November 18, 1987, A8.

³"Mystery ship found -- without any refugees," Montreal Gazette August 4, 1987, A1.

be refugees in order to get around normal immigration procedures. This Bill gave immigration officers the power to deport refugee claimants without a hearing if they arrived from a designated "safe" third country (such as Germany, in many of the Tamil cases).

The new refugee determination process came into effect on January 1, 1989. Under the new system, as soon as a refugee arrives he or she undergoes an interview by an immigration agent. If the case is deemed contestable, an order is made to detain the person. During the following two days, the person requesting asylum must present him- or herself in front of an official from the Ministry of Immigration as well as a member of the Commission of Immigration Status. At that point, the commission decides whether the fear of persecution in the home country is legitimate. The candidate is then either deported or granted a further hearing by two members of the commission. This body is independent of the Ministry, and decides finally whether or not to grant refugee status. If the person is to be deported, an appeal must be sought within 72 hours.¹

Faced with much controversy and extreme opposition to the new policy, especially from Church-affiliated refugee

¹Under the old system, refugee claimants could live in Canada for seven years after appealing the government decision. Church groups estimated that the number of deportations and appeals would be considerably higher.

relief workers, Prime Minister Mulroney stated publicly that introduction of the new measures was not in response to any racist bias toward the Tamils and Sikhs, but rather in response to the unfairness of "queue jumping."¹

4.6 The Attack on the Mosaic.

The culture keepers in the Montreal Tamil community are very much aware of the fact that they as a group were singled out as a symbol for and object of the "refugee backlash."² They are also aware that the Sri Lankan Tamils have often been cited by the media as examples of those who are "queue jumping," and used to justify changes to the refugee determination process.³

¹It was the ability of the lifeboat Tamils to instantly receive a ministerial permit ("queue jumping") which is said to have angered many Canadians, especially those who had arrived as economic immigrants through "proper" channels.

²One friend pointed out, in the context of a conversation about stereotyping in Canadian hospitals, that it is unlikely that a nurse would automatically assume, on seeing a South Asian, that a "scientist" had come to the hospital, and that this is something that cannot be avoided. "I think it is the media which has portrayed us in this way. If they think that you are from India, then they think of a snake charmer, or a beggar, or the tribals, or they think that you are a fugitive by boat or something like that. Of course, you can't avoid that. That's the media, what it does."

³Many people from the Montreal Tamil community expressed concern to me that Sri Lankan Tamils are being wrongfully deported under Bill C-55. One of the Montreal Tamils wrote an article for a local Tamil newspaper, in which he criticized Bill C-55, saying that it is anti-refugee in nature, going against Canadian traditions, closing the door against refugees, violating human rights,

In a Montreal Tamil newspaper, Nāyakan, the editor used his wit and sarcasm to respond to the media representation of Sri Lankan Tamils. He wrote an article in response to newspaper coverage of the arrests of six Toronto-area drug dealers who were reported to be Tamils. The Globe & Mail and the Toronto Star had reported that six men had been planning to sell heroin in order to purchase machine guns and a helicopter to carry out a planned tactical assault on a penitentiary and free three other drug dealers. The police had code-named the project "Project Sri List," because "most of the suspects in the case are from Sri Lanka."¹ In fact only two of the men were from Sri Lanka. Sivan wrote the following article, which he printed in newspaper format, alongside a copy of the Toronto Star article. Above the article he added: "The way things are going, we may have such incidents reported. This is just fiction."

pushing out foreigners "in the sight of" Americans and Europeans (in other words, setting a poor example), ignoring the research findings of Parliamentary committees, rejecting the views of church and refugee aid groups, and failing to consider the views of immigration lawyers. He called on the Tamil community to "oppose it, with the help of Canadians of good will" (Tamil Elil 1987).

¹While the Star reported that most of the men were Sri Lankans ("Drug dealers jailbreak plan foiled," Toronto Star January 1, 1988), according to the Globe article, all six were from Sri Lanka ("Three drug raids yield heroin supply worth \$70 million," Globe & Mail January 1, 1988).

"Onions Stolen"¹

It is reported that a supermarket was attacked by helicopters and heavy weapons and a kilo of onions was stolen by Sri Lankan Tamils.

Dissatisfaction: New facts have come to light in this connection. Supermarkets are usually locked up at night in Canada. Some Tamils were unable to get onions, indispensable for their dinner. Six dissatisfied Tamils hired two helicopters, attacked the store, and made off with a kilo of onions.

Police astounded on seeing the nature of the attack: A nearby store, open round the clock, had onions. In spite of knowing this the Tamils carried out the attack. The police pursued the Tamils and endeavoured to arrest them.

Arrested with a spoon: Late news -- The Tamils who were cooking meat bought at the U.S. border were caught, spoon in hand, with the onions. The smell of the curry powder caused the police to sneeze several times in the street and run down the culprits.

The six Tamil refugees arrested are all under twenty. Five of these arrived in Canada only a week ago (Nāyakan aippaci, 1989).

By the late 1980s, a great deal of media attention was being paid to rising intolerance toward immigrants and refugees from the "Third World" to Canada. For instance, the July 10, 1989 issue of Canada's leading national magazine, MacLean's, featured an article entitled "An angry racial backlash: Canada's ethnic mosaic under attack: the rise of third world immigration."

In 1990, the publication of Reginald Bibby's Mosaic Madness -- a book which lambasted Canada's policy of

¹Titles of Tamil newspaper articles used in this dissertation will appear in quotation marks and italics. Unless otherwise indicated, all newspaper articles have been translated from Tamil. In some cases, I have included the original (transliterated) version in the Appendix.

multiculturalism -- gained much media attention and aroused a great deal of controversy within the academic community. Bibby's longitudinal survey of Canadian attitudes over a ten-year period showed that support for multiculturalism is dwindling and that many Canadians view the policy as contributing to a breakdown in Canadian society, the loosening of group ties and moral values, and the destruction of familiar symbols and ways of doing things. Bibby's (1990) findings were supported by those of the Spicer Commission (The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future) which released its findings in June 1991, based on interviews with 400,000 Canadian groups and individuals. This survey found that Canadians value cultural diversity, but would like different cultures to become part of an "evolving mainstream" (cited in Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:370).

The federal government responded to what it saw as an attack on the ethnic mosaic by the Canadian public at large, and in July 1991, the same year that the federal Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship was established, published a booklet entitled "Multiculturalism: What is it Really all About?" (Canada 1991). The booklet, written in question and answer format, is geared toward dispelling some of the arguments critical of the Canadian multiculturalism policy. For instance one of the examples of "common questions" about multiculturalism included in the booklet

was: "Are Canadian symbols and traditions being eroded by multiculturalism?" The answer given included the statement that "as Canadian society evolves, our symbols and institutions also change" (Canada 1991:22) and, presumably in response to the issue of whether or not Sikh RCMP officers should be allowed to wear turbans,¹ mentioned that "another symbol -- the Canadian Mountie -- has also changed its image, most recently when the RCMP began to actively recruit women and minorities. These changes recognize Canadian diversity and the right of all Canadians to be part of their country's institutions."²

The debate over whether the Canadian multiculturalism policy is an appropriate model for Canadian unity and identity will be returned to in Chapter Six, in the context of a discussion on how the "authenticated" culture being promoted in the policy meshes well with the concept of culture being promoted by Tamil culture keepers. First, I will turn to an analysis of the ideological divide within the Montreal Tamil community over just how and why Tamil culture should be promoted and preserved.

¹The familiar symbol of the Canadian Mounted Police officer's hat is perceived as threatened by Sikh RCMP officers, who now wear their turbans.

²It is interesting that while the multiculturalism policy was, and continues to be, directly concerned with perceived threats to Canadian unity resulting from Quebec nationalism and the increase in "Third World" immigrants, it was not formulated in response to the call for self-government by First Nations peoples.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE STORY OF THE SPLIT

Within the Tamil community in Montreal, there is an ideological split over how and why Tamil cultural identity should be maintained. Both sides see it as a split between those leaders who are mainly concerned with the establishment of a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka and those who are mainly concerned with passing on Tamil culture to Tamil children in Montreal. This split is described within the community as being between "politics" and "culture."¹ Each side wants to unite the Tamil community under their belief system, in order to ensure that the Tamil language and culture are safeguarded.

I will describe how this split within the community developed, focusing on the 1989 *Onriyam* Annual General Meeting, when the growing rift between the culture keepers reached a crucial point and led to a perceived "take-over" of two of the community organizations by the "political" side of the divide.

¹Taylor discusses a split along similar lines, in his discussion of Sri Lankan Hindu immigrants in Britain (1987:152).

5.1 The "Cultural" Side.

"Message from the President"

Tamil, which is sweeter than nectar, can best be made known through cultural activities. We implore Goddess Sarasvati, the source of the 64 arts, to grant us the skill to portray all these arts through the medium of drama. Drama incorporates dance. The two together are termed *kūttu*. This comprises literature, music, and drama. The last is the best vehicle for cultural renaissance. Drama is essential if we are to unite and guide our fellow Tamils in foreign lands. If we are to hand down our language and culture to coming generations struggling to survive in the midst of alien cultures, such cultural shows as these are indispensable. The Tamil Associations in Montreal are rendering yeoman service in this respect. I feel Tamils all over Canada should be served by a united cultural association such as ours. While dedicating our efforts to the goddess, it behooves us to honour those who participate in these activities and encourage them. May our activities grow and get enriched (President, Canada Tamil Cultural Association, *Kalai vilā* programme, 1989).

The cultural side of the ideological divide is most clearly evidenced in the work of the *Canada Tamil Kalāccāra Caṅkam* (Canada Tamil Cultural Association). The association was organized by Natarajah, a local writer, in 1989. He wanted to have an organization that was purely "cultural," with no involvement at all with Sri Lankan politics. His association involves over twenty local Tamil artists (musicians, dancers, playwrights, and actors) who work together to promote and encourage the Tamil arts in Montreal. Natarajah's goals are to support local Tamil talent and to teach the Tamil children of Montreal about their culture through the medium of drama.

The association meets at the home of Natarajah to plan and prepare for the plays which they perform for the *kalai viḷā* that are part of the celebration of the annual Hindu festivals in Montreal. Every year in the Tamil month of *puṟaṭṭāci* (October-November) Natarajah's association hosts a *Vani viḷā*¹ programme as part of the Sarasvati puja. The concert includes dramas reenacting scenes from the classics, performances of *Bhārata Nāṭyam*, and classical Tamil music. At this programme, a few local artists are awarded gold medals for their contribution to Tamil culture, in order to encourage them to continue developing their own talents and promoting Tamil culture in Montreal.²

Natarajah has not yet applied for government funding, but eventually wants to register the association and do it "the proper way." Funding currently comes from "well-wishers," people who are not directly involved with the

¹"Vani" is another name for the goddess Sarasvati, who is the goddess of education and the arts.

²The biographies of those honoured are also printed in the concert programme. For example:

Kandiah Therulognathan was born in Arijalai, Jaffna. He is a good actor, and like others from that area, has brought fame to his birthplace. He has made a name for himself acting in 'Welcome to Canada,' 'Cantaipam' ['Opportunity in a Meeting'], and 'Pattaṭupōtum' ['I've had enough']. He is also joint editor of *Tamil Elil*. Stories, plays, dialogues, acting, production, and direction -- he turns his hand to all these and is the only young artist who has been doing this for the past five years. He is skilled in humorous narrative, too. May Goddess Sarasvati bless and praise him with us (*Kalai Viḷā* programme, 1989).

association but enjoy attending the plays that are performed.

Natarajah's newspaper, Vīṇaikkōṭi, officially launched at the Vāni viḷā of 1990, was to be a voice for the Tamil arts in Montreal, but has never been published past the first issue due to lack of funds. Eventually Natarajah plans to expand the association to continue the publication of the magazine, to allow for the performance of many more dramas, and to open a cultural library where community members can learn more about the Tamil arts.

Natarajah is very concerned that his organization remain completely apolitical, in order to unite the entire Tamil community. Through a unified Tamil voice, he believes, Tamil language and culture will be able to survive:

(Natarajah): We have all come here [to Canada] and found that politically it is all destruction [in the Tamil community]. Therefore, I wish to be rid of politics. I want to see that our culture and our traditions do not perish. That is my objective. My objective is to see that the young generation do not forget their culture, their traditions. In that hope, I want to see that even the children who are born here do not forget our cultural traditions. This is my motive, to see that they are educated. Not politically, the political education has been a mess here -- our people [i.e., the people of his association] do not like politics. So our idea is to see that our culture and tradition is not forgotten by the future generation.

If you invite these political people to a meeting, only their supporters will come, the rest of the people won't come. But to a cultural programme, everybody will come. So, we get a chance to get together. So that the entire Tamil community will be united.

(FB): Oh I see what you mean: for a lot of the other organizations, only a few people are actually involved, because there's a clear political viewpoint.

(Natarajah): Yes, that's right.

(FB): But with your organization, people, no matter what their politics are, will still show up, so it's a way of uniting the whole community.

(Natarajah): Yes. I can talk to them, I can make them laugh, so that they're not so long-faced. It's just a diplomatic way to get the community all in one place. So that's my idea. It is best to be aloof of politics. That is my opinion. Culture is the only bridge to bring all of the people together. If I write certain things, or promote plays or dramas, eventually those people [the 'political' side] will understand what they really want for the community. So, even if it takes time, it may help in the long run.

(Talaivar): As a writer, he feels that if, in writing, by accident he touches on something a little political, it is twisted [by the political side] to serve their purposes.

(Natarajah): Most recently it has happened on one occasion to me. So they [the 'political' side] don't understand what I am expressing. It is, maybe, lack of understanding or education I suppose.

(Talaivar): Because most of the people who are here and who are speaking politics do not have that educational background, so there's no point in trying to convince them on something. They will not agree. So, the best thing is to keep out of it. If he [Natarajah] writes something, you know, even one line, if it misses something, then it is spotlighted in the papers [meaning the local Tamil papers].

(Natarajah): The aim is to unite not only Sri Lankan Tamils. My policy is that the Tamil people anywhere in the world, whether it be Indians, Malaysian Tamils, or Singapore Tamils, any Tamil from any country should be able to unite, not just Sri Lankan Tamils. That is my goal. I feel that my point of view is recognized by even other communities, like the Indians and the Malaysians,

who have been at some of my cultural shows [*kalai viḷā*]. I find that unlike other cultural shows, I'm gradually getting the crowd, the Tamils from other countries, and I feel happy about it. So that is the easy way to bring all of the Tamils together, united. When they are all united, our problems will be solved easily.

(Talaivar): When he says 'Tamil culture' he is referring not to Sri Lankans alone, he means internationally, say Malaysian Tamils, all of those put together.

(Natarajah): So once united in such a way, they will speak for us one day. Now there's isolation [between different groups of Tamils]. We don't want to get in trouble with Sri Lankan politics. The Tamils should speak as one voice, internationally.

Natarajah appeals to the community of Tamils in Montreal to unite under his organization, with the common goal of preserving Tamil culture in Canada. He feels that education of the children is the key to maintaining Tamil culture in Canada.

(Natarajah): Communities of various cultures and manners have settled down in this country, so because of that we must educate our children in the correct approach in what they are to do and in what our culture is, also.

To educate people in that way, we have to study the stories like the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇam*, so it is our intention to somewhat educate them by having dramas, concerts, so that even the children here will understand what it [Tamil culture] is. Because when you ask them to read *Rāmāyaṇam* or anything, they will not. So the only easy way is to produce a play. In our country, we teach them [about the Tamil classics] in the school. Here they don't have the opportunity to learn about the *Rāmāyaṇam* and the *Bhagavadgīta*, all the spiritual education. Our children have actually no access, no opportunity to read this, so it is our intention to sort of educate the people in those stories, by acting plays, that's an easy way of putting it across.

Given that children have little desire or time to learn about language and culture, Natarajah believes that the medium of drama is a highly effective means of passing on information in a way that the children will grasp.

5.2 The "Political" Side.

"Vikatan Answers Your Question"

Q. Is right to broadcast news of the struggle in Eelam, abroad?

A. It has been done to a great extent by Tamils living abroad. The rest need not be considered Tamils (*Tamil Elil Aipacci*, 1985).

The Montreal chapter of the World Tamil Movement (WTM) exists to support the activities of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or "Tigers").¹ The Montreal group was organized in the early 1980s and at that time was composed of a small group of men who met in members homes. The association members remained "underground" until 1984, out of fear of being deported for their pro-militant stance. By 1991 the World Tamil Movement had a membership of about 900 people, which was by far the largest membership of any of the associations. The members of the WTM see themselves, and are recognized by others, as being the only politically oriented association of Tamils in Montreal. Their

¹The "Tigers" are the largest and most powerful of the groups fighting for an independent Tamil homeland (Eelam) in Sri Lanka.

orientation is to the well-being of Tamils in Sri Lanka, rather than to those in Canada.

The WTM centre contains a library with a large selection of current newspapers from Sri Lanka and India; a 24-hour telephone hot line with the latest news about events in Sri Lanka (which they receive by fax directly from the WTM office in Colombo); an impressive selection of videos and photographs documenting the horrors of the civil war, including some of the atrocities committed by the Indian Peace Keeping Force which WTM members have managed to smuggle out of the country; and Tiger propaganda videos. WTM members also occasionally help new refugee claimants to find accommodation and lawyers, but these activities are considered secondary to aiding the Tigers in Sri Lanka in their struggle for a separate Tamil homeland.

One of the services WTM members provide is informing interested Canadians about the situation in Sri Lanka. They are occasionally invited to educational institutions where they lecture about and show photographs of the war in Sri Lanka. As well, they lobby the Canadian government to take action against the Sri Lankan government, writing letters and meeting with government officials. At one time the WTM had their own newspaper, Tākum, but it was only published briefly. They distribute the Toronto WTM newspapers in Montreal.

About every three months or so the WTM in Montreal

hosts a *kalai vilā* evening programme, with Indian artists who sing popular Indian film songs, to raise money for the Tigers.¹ Because of their large membership, they are able to go door to door to sell tickets to these fund-raising events, which places them at a decided advantage over other associations in terms of funds raised, and in fact practically guarantees that they will not lose money on the event. The evening programmes are distinctive in the Tamil community, in that they are not locally organized and operated events. They are organized by middle-men from India, stationed in Toronto or the United States, who are specialists in organizing concerts and receive a fee of up to \$6,000 to cover their expenses and services for bringing in "playback singers" from India. Although the financial outlay is significant, the programmes are very popular in the Tamil community and usually make a profit.

A major concern of those on the "political" side is that Tamils living in Canada can not possibly retain their cultural identity -- they believe that only in a truly Tamil land (Eelam) can the Tamil language and culture survive. Chandran was vice-president of the World Tamil Movement at the time of my fieldwork. This is what he had to say about

¹Of the three branches of the WTM -- the political wing, the fighters, and the "social work" done by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization -- the group in Montreal only sends money officially to the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), to help LTTE members injured in fighting for Tamil Eelam.

the goals of the WTM:

(Chandran): The Tamil militant Tigers are fighting for a separate state. We have to lend them good support. We are not giving them proper support, you know.

(FB): Because there's not enough funds being raised?

(Chandran): Yes. Yes. And you know they expect a lot of money from abroad, you know. Their people are not willing to give a lot of money for fighting you know.

(FB): Why do you think that is -- because people are in Canada now, and removed from...

(Chandran): Yes. That's also there. And there are many other groups also [other supporters of militant groups, in Canada]. Say, a person from the TELO group [Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization], he won't give any money to the Tigers. So, that is involved. Mainly they [people in Canada who are not involved with WTM] are not interested. Once their children and wife are here, they have nothing to worry about. They won't be worried even about their sisters and brothers who are in Sri Lanka. So that is there. And many people are not interested in politics also, you know.

The culture keepers on the "political" side claim that those on the "cultural" side of the split do not understand the need for creating Eelam. They are concerned that by focusing on life in Canada, rather than helping in some way to aid the "boys" in Sri Lanka, those on the "cultural" side are detracting from the Tamil cause and unwittingly leading to the downfall of the Tamil nation.

Both Natarajah of the Canada Tamil Cultural Association and Chandran of the World Tamil Movement are striving to preserve the Tamil language and culture. Both feel that

their organization is taking the best approach to ensuring that Tamil cultural identity will survive, and both call for the Tamil community in Montreal to unite under their leadership, in order to reach that goal. Both rely mainly on evening "cultural programmes" (*kalai vilā*) as the vehicle for promoting and preserving Tamil culture.

For the Canada Tamil Cultural Association, hosting a *kalai vilā* not only provides entertainment and brings together the entire community for the event itself, but the preparations for the event -- involving the children, their parents, artists, and association leaders -- are seen as an ideal way to pass on the Tamil language and culture to the children, thus making the programmes an ideal way of preserving and promoting Tamil cultural identity in Canada.

For the WTM, hosting a *kalai vilā* not only ensures that the children learn about their language and culture through their participation in the programme, but the large crowds drawn to the entertainment enables the association to raise money to help those fighting for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka, an ideal way to guarantee the preservation of Tamil cultural identity.

5.3 Onriyam and the 1989 Annual General Meeting.

According to those on the "cultural" side of the divide, the "political" side has gradually begun to take over the community organizations, effectively diminishing

the power of those on the "cultural" side to work together to preserve and promote Tamil culture. It was at the Annual General Meeting of Onriyam in 1989 that this perceived "take-over" is said to have occurred.

Onriyam was organized in 1982 and registered in 1983 for the purposes of helping Tamil refugees settle in Montreal. In the early 1980s the association was actively involved in and very devoted to community work, aiding Tamil refugees with advice on immigration, referral to lawyers, translation of documents, and interpretation for meetings with lawyers or for required medical examinations. As well, the association lobbied the Canadian government for action against the Sri Lankan government, published the Tamil Elil magazine, and hosted the annual Puttāṅṅu viḷā (New Year's programme).

The association continues to do all of these activities, but by the late 1980s, one of its chief activities became the preservation and promotion of Tamil culture in Canada. The Onriyam Women's Group is responsible for many of the association's educational and cultural activities. The women have held classes in Tamil, French, and religion for the children, and classes in English and French for adults, and have taught music, handicrafts, and drama to the children, in the context of preparing them for participating in the kalai viḷās.

There are many versions of just how the WTM came to

"take over" *Onriyam*, but all agree that Father Joseph was a major player in the "take-over." At the time of the 1989 *Onriyam* Annual General Meeting, Father Joseph was the president of *Onriyam*.

Father Joseph is an Anglican priest who was one of the first Tamil refugees to arrive in Montreal. In Sri Lanka, he had been active in aiding Tamil refugees through the Gandhian association which looked after the needs of the Indian Tamils (the indentured labourers of the hill country) who were coming to the North and Eastern provinces for protection from persecution. He had intended to continue his work in India, with Tamil refugees there, but after a period of imprisonment in Sri Lanka was forced to flee. He went first to the U.S., where he attended a seminar to update his skills in counselling psychology, and then came to Canada in 1983. Once in Montreal, Father Joseph immediately became involved in the refugee-relief effort through the Anglican church. He was, and continues to be, a key figure in the Tamil refugee community, and was instrumental in the resettlement of the first Tamil refugees arriving in Montreal. As part of his work through the church, he set up a monthly support group which he called "*Kuṭumpam*" (family). It was an informal gathering over a "pot-luck" dinner, where newly arrived Tamil refugees could meet with him and receive some much-needed support with the process of resettlement. He later became active in the

World Tamil Movement, and then with *Onriyam*.

There are many versions of the story of the role that Father Joseph played in the "take-over" of *Onriyam* by the WTM. According to one version, Father Joseph was a naive victim of the WTM. He had decided to stack the membership in his favour in order to win the presidency, and managed to increase the membership from about thirty people to around 100 people over a period of a few days. The new members were WTM members who were signed up and paid for by Father Joseph -- thus, he managed to maintain the *Onriyam* presidency but ended up being the unwilling puppet of the WTM. In a variation on this story, Talaivar had been brought in by Joseph to help him to win the presidency. According to this version of the "take-over," it was Talaivar's idea that the WTM should be brought in, and the two of them, Talaivar and Joseph, made arrangements to do so.

In a second version, Joseph was originally anti-Tiger in his political sentiments, but he brought in the WTM members in order to oust two men who belonged to a rival militant group. Others say he just wanted to oust *Onriyam* Vice President Velan and a second man, now in Toronto, who had been working hard for *Onriyam* and were threatening Joseph's power, and the Tigers were just waiting for an opportunity to grab at the organization and gain control of it.

In yet a third version, Sivan confessed to me that it was he who was responsible for bringing in Joseph.

(Sivan): I caused Father Joseph to be the president. I'll say that was me. And nobody wanted him to be president. I knew him because he used to call me to attend an organization called *Tamil Kuṭumpam*, to participate in the activities. And at the same time, of course, he wanted to do some community work -- speaking about refugees, the kind of view which the Church is taking. When [a popular BBC correspondent] came to Montreal, who was very involved in Sri Lankan affairs -- he was asked by the Sri Lankan government to get out of the country twice, something like that -- and Father Joseph organized that and he asked us to help, and we helped. And he got involved in *Onriyam* in that way. He didn't have much support among the community at that time. Then, when I was about to leave from *Onriyam*, what we thought is that we want a person who can really do business with the community. We suggested that Joseph should be the person, because he is involved in politics, and he was the most suitable person to be the president of *Onriyam*.

(FB): Because you wanted someone who knew about...

(Sivan): He knew about the past and the future [of the organization], you know, we didn't want to bring in a new person and start again. And when he came of course he had some problems, when he came here. After he arrived, Shakti and Velan got involved with *Onriyam* -- this was all after I left, after I resigned from the position of secretary, although I was still there as a committee member at that time. Then Father Joseph and Velan, they always had problems. Velan was vice president, Father was president, so of course they had some problems in that sense, because Father Joseph started to openly support the LTTE - - that was the basic problem. And of course, Velan doesn't support the LTTE. Velan felt that there were a lot of things to be criticized [about the LTTE] and that *Onriyam* should be a neutral organization and not take any position on politics, that we have to be like that.

So, we had a general election at that time. Father Joseph wanted to be the president again, so we kept quiet at that time, because we felt, and I had an argument, very heated with Father Joseph

before that but I decided to keep quiet because I didn't want to get involved in all that, and Velan and people they wanted to challenge him. So, of course there were two groups again, and we had a big and most vulnerable election in 1989. Of course, Joseph won with the support of the LTTE.

Father Joseph maintains that he has always been sympathetic to the Tigers and to the work that they are doing to help the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka, and was a supporter of the WTM long before *Onriyam* and WTM joined forces. This is his account of the community divide:

(Joseph): Among them [the WTM] there were the most committed people. So what they did was, they were able to meet people, go door-knocking, and they gained such strength that they were able to have a sportsmeet much better than either *Onriyam* or *Oli* could have. So we [*Onriyam*] thought that we are not going to join [i.e., they were reluctant to join with WTM]. At one point there was a big conflict, and debating within me, and with our committee, about what we were going to do. Are we to isolate ourselves from these fellows, from the other two [WTM and *Oli*], or do we join with them. So we went forward and said we would like to work with you, but we are independent, we are not a political group. We won't, some of us may be sympathizers of the Tigers, but we won't openly say that, or do it.

(FB): Yes, this is what Selvan¹ was saying.

(Joseph): Or, even, we may not be sympathizers at all, but we want to have the general good of the Tamils, cultural and things, and of course exposing the human rights violations of Sri Lanka and things like that.

The meeting. No matter who actually helped to elect Joseph for president, the rift that had been developing

¹Selvan succeeded Father Joseph as president of *Onriyam*.

within the community came to be the "split" that it is today at the October 1989 annual general meeting when Joseph was voted in as president. The meeting was quite a rowdy event: on the "cultural" side of the divide was a group of people headed by Velan, vice president of *Onriyam* at the time, who began laying charges against Joseph for having stacked the membership and rigged the voting. On the "political" side were Joseph's supporters, including the many members of WTM who had recently become members.¹

According to a statement by the chief elections official² (later reprinted in *Tamil Elil*) this is what happened:

"Statement by the Elections Officials"

I took charge of all the ballot papers and the ballot box and with both my assistants went back to the hall. There were a lot of disturbances, some wanted to speak but there was much objection from the floor of the House. At times the president was unable to control the House and police was [sic] called in twice to bring order. Some came to me and to my assistants and said that the elections should not be held. They indicated to us that the whole process was faulty. However, we had no mandate to held an inquiry...We decided to call for a show of hands to see if they wanted the elections or not.... When we called for those who did not want the elections there were only eighteen hands that went up [of 350 people present]. The scenario was now becoming clear to us. At this point eleven of the contestants led by [Mr. Velan] who was a

¹There were 259 registered members, with 22 contestants to fill eleven executive positions.

²The election officials were from the South Asian Woman's Community Centre, the firm Pratt and Whitney, and the Ecumenical Working Group for Refugees.

presidential contestant withdrew their names.... It became obvious to us that a slender minority wanted to frustrate the electoral process (statement by the elections officials, reprinted in Tamil Elil Tai, 1990 [orig. in English]).

The following is the *Onriyam* executive's published account of what happened at the meeting. In their account it was both Velan and Sivan who caused a disturbance, which started not at the meeting, but on the previous day, when they submitted "bogus cheques" for their membership fees.

"The Truth Clarified"

A person who interrupted proceedings, disregarded rules, asked questions and created a disturbance was requested to resume his seat. He had been nominated for the post of secretary. Even though the former vice-president¹ and his supporters took the wrong approach and submitted bogus cheques, they were accepted and forms were given because *Onriyam* always welcomes those who wish to serve the Tamil community. But the bank rejected the cheques. The latter should have been given five days prior to the date specified or should have been certified. One of the signatures admitted he had credited the money on the eleventh when the closing date was the tenth. Why didn't those who gave the cheques take action? They could have filed legal action or acted through the bank, if they felt *Onriyam* had acted wrongly. Messrs. [Velan], [Sivan] and party did not hand in subscriptions in cash or by cheque. Instead they gave three blank cheques which were rejected by the bank. Why? What happened to the money that they collected?

They removed the membership register from the *Onriyam* office without the permission of the *Onriyam* executive committee. The female treasurer was reduced to tears. They threatened to throw out [Father Joseph] bodily and abused him. If the latter had demanded cheques, as they stated, why didn't they take legal action? Their behaviour was condemned by other Tamils in the apartment

¹Velan.

building that very day. The *Onriyam* executive sought police protection for the election meeting. Only five percent of those present voted against having the elections. There was anger shown against those who tried to disrupt the proceedings.

The editor and photographer of *Tāyakam*¹ from Toronto attended the meeting. They said that they were prevented from taking photographs. They had neither identified themselves nor obtained permission from the executive committee to report on proceedings. *Onriyam* never opposes the press or artists. While describing the ugly incidents of the tenth at the meeting, the treasurer said that the cheques had been forced on her. Later, this statement was withdrawn. She said only [Velan] and [Sivan] were known to her among those who cause the disturbance. *Nāyakan*,² when reporting this, objected strongly to the use of force. But why didn't they mention the names of [Velan] and [Sivan]? Why didn't they censure Velan for signing without permission in the membership register? Why didn't they query those who maintained that the cheques were genuine, for not taking action through the bank or legal action? Why not even query *Onriyam* for not summoning the police when the aforesaid caused a furore in the *Onriyam* office?

Our main objective is to respond to the violation of human rights in Sri Lanka and make known the political ambitions of the Tamils [in Sri Lanka]. Only those who oppose the growth and development of the Tamils would take up a stand against us here. When the president quoted a couplet in praise of Tamil Eelam, the former secretary and the individual nominated for the secretary's post by this group shouted '*vantē mātaram*.'³ Know them, ye people (by the Executive Committee of *Onriyam*, *Tamil Elil Karttikai*, 1989 [orig. in English]).

¹*Tāyakam* is a newspaper published by a close friend of Sivan.

²*Nāyakan* is a newspaper published by Sivan.

³This was a slogan in India during the country's fight for independence, and means "Welcome, Mother," or "looking forward to Mother," with "Mother" referring to the homeland.

The Toronto newspaper Tayakam which was mentioned in the passage above (in which it was stated that the press was not allowed to photograph the proceedings) also accused Joseph of misusing Onriyam funds. In response, Onriyam hired lawyers who threatened to sue, and a letter to this effect was published in Tamil Elil:

"Letter to the Editor of Thayaham [sic]"

We represent [Father Joseph] and the directors of the Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec. We wish to protest in the strongest possible terms your slanderous comments which appeared in the November 3 edition of the Thayaham Newspaper. Your dishonest attack on both the President [Father Joseph], and the executive members of the association with the suggestion that some \$8000 were misused is unconscionable. As you well know, the association's books are audited and available for inspection. We require immediate retraction of your slanderous writings in the November 3 edition of the Thayaham newspaper. You are also called upon in the future to refrain from all malicious, slanderous writings about our clients. Failure to respect the terms of the present will result in immediate injunctive action. Our clients hereby reserve also their right to civil damages (Tamil Elil kārttikai, 1989 [orig. in English]).

Shortly after that meeting, the offices of Onriyam were closed, and the association began to share office-space and resources with the WTM.

Gradually, pro-Tiger membership within a third association, Tamilar Oli, had grown sufficiently that it, too, was believed by those on the "cultural" side of the

community divide to be run by the WTM people. *Tamilar Oḷi*¹ was officially opened on May 20, 1984. Like *Onriyam*, it was established to provide aid to incoming refugees in Montreal, and also functioned as a community centre where Tamil culture, language, and religion could be promoted and preserved in Canada. According to Mr. Rajah, president of *Oḷi* since 1987, *Oḷi*'s purpose is similar to that of *Onriyam*, except that whereas *Onriyam* is an association for Sri Lankan Tamils, *Oḷi* was formed for "all Tamils," whether they be from Sri Lanka, India or Malaysia.

By all reports, *Oḷi* was a booming organization in its early years, due largely to the fact that it was organized and run by a group of educated, English-speaking Catholics, with funding from the Catholic Church. According to one of the members from those early years, the building itself was quite large, with a library, a room for taping the radio programme, an administration office with a full-time administrative secretary and other full-time staff, and a special room assigned for the young volunteers. Throughout the years, *Oḷi* has published three different magazines -- *Ilankīrru*, *Tamil Oḷi*, and the latest, *Pārvai*. Under Mr. Rajah, classes were initiated -- English and French for

¹"*Oḷi*" means light. The slogan of the organization is "*Oḷi etuvōm*" ("Light the lamp"). I was told that this means "Be a light unto the nation," and that just as one lights a lamp at the beginning of every auspicious event, likewise *Oḷi* "will lead the people from the darkness and bring them to the light" (Rajah).

adults, and Tamil language and Hinduism classes for children. In addition, *Oḷi* provided a weekly Tamil language radio programme which featured news, small dramas, interviews, and a children's programme. Every August, *Oḷi* hosts the *Muttamiḷ viḷā* evening programme, a celebration of Tamil culture involving plays, dances, and drama.

By 1991 financial problems and the lack of volunteers had left substantially reduced the *Oḷi* organization. Their publications had been discontinued the previous year,¹ the radio programme was temporarily on hold, and they had only one teacher of English and French. *Oḷi* joined forces with the WTM and *Onriyam* in 1991.

According to Father Joseph, it was only with great difficulty that the WTM was able to persuade *Oḷi* to join. Speaking of the WTM's sportsmeet of 1991, he said:

(Joseph): And I told the man in charge of the World Tamil Association, be careful, get the Tamilar *Oḷi* people to come and distribute prizes. Everybody else has visitors or prominent people who are coming to give prizes. So, when I said that, they tried to say 'Father you also give one.' I said 'I don't want to do that. Because I am one of yours. You call the Tamilar *Oḷi* president and ask him to give a prize to somebody.'

So, you know, little, little things that we did and we had some voting, but you know the thing is they even went to a lawyer, and the lawyer said if you join them you won't get your grants. And so we also went to see the lawyer, and the lawyer called them and told them they would still get

¹I was told that *Oḷi* had stopped publishing *Pārvai* not just because of lack of funds, but because the editors had allowed a poem to be published which the WTM people opposed because of its anti-LTTE content.

their grants.

So I met the secretary [of *Oḷi*]. And the [lawyer who was advising about government grants] told the people [of *Oḷi*] that there would be no problem with the grant, that when they start a project, the grant will still be given, but that they should try to work together [the associations] so it would be easier on everyone [to get grants], and also everyone would spend less money. But they still don't want to join us, really, fully, but some inroads have been made.

Just last year this happened. After we moved from Victoria to Plamondon, Van Horne.¹ But there were some people, you know, who had some kinds of advantages [i.e., some people of *Oḷi* were reluctant to give up the advantages that came with total independence] -- we don't know what that is and we didn't want to -- we tried to pressure them and it was about to break [i.e., the agreement to join forces nearly fell through]. But they came [*Oḷi* did join with *Onriyam*]. Now, you know, the grip of business is in the hands of the World Tamil Association. Whenever they call, they [*Onriyam* and *Oḷi*] come.

5.4 The "Culture" Side Abandons *Onriyam*.

Many of the culture keepers on the cultural side of the community divide left *Onriyam* shortly after that annual general meeting. While there were many reasons why their personal ideologies regarding "culture" clashed with those of the new executive, all hinged on the belief that the introduction of politics into the community associations would interfere with the goal of preserving and promoting Tamil culture in Canada.

Sivan not only quit *Onriyam* because he disagreed with introducing politics into the organization -- he also

¹Meaning after *Onriyam* moved into the same office space as the WTM.

disagreed with the type of politics being introduced, that is, the pro-LTTE stance:

(Sivan): I started that newspaper, Nāyakan, because I was so angry with these things [with political events within the Onriyam organization] and I thought okay it is time to start a place to educate, and of course I had financial trouble with that and I couldn't continue. At the same time, one of my friends started a newspaper [Tāyakam] in Toronto. His was successful financially, and we have similar opinions on politics, so it's going pretty good, so I support and write for them.

They [the 'political' side] don't want to have any open relations, or open discussions about what they are doing. If you go and start criticizing them, there won't be any reaction to that. That's the reason why we thought there should be some other newspaper, or some other news media to tell about the WTM, because it's a small community here, and most of them are not all that educated. Now, our newspaper, this Tāyakam, is still in Montreal. We always criticize the WTM and the LTTE, we try to publicize and say that this [what WTM and LTTE are doing] is wrong. And we have gained a lot of unpleasant friends at the same time.

(FB): So how many copies of this are distributed in Montreal?

(Sivan): Now it's small. Well, we had about a thousand at one time. Now, it's difficult. What it is, is this WTM, they went into these shops and they forced them not to carry it.¹ So now we have only three major grocery shops [in which to circulate the newspaper]. So the sales are reduced. But it doesn't mean that they don't read it. They will get and read it, somewhere.

Talaivar had enjoyed his position as administrative

¹There also were copies of the American-published book The Broken Palmyra circulating within the Tamil community, a book which people on the "cultural" side claim the WTM had outlawed in Montreal because it contained information which presented the LTTE in a negative light.

secretary of Onriyam, but after the WTM took over he found that his freedom of expression was being curtailed by the WTM, who only wanted pro-LTTE viewpoints presented.

Talaivar is an example of someone who may be supportive of efforts toward the establishment of an independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka, but feels that freedom of expression must be maintained in Canada, and all perspectives presented.

(Talaivar): The Eelam Tamil Association [Onriyam] was getting more and more political and people were trying to sort of interfere in my decisions and all, so I thought the best thing was to quit and not be involved. So at that annual general meeting there was a keen contest of elections, and delegation of offices, elections to offices, so [laughs slightly] I found that the trend was very bad, because I was always keeping aloof of politics. And I found that politics were getting in, politics in the sense of not Canadian politics, local politics -- Sri Lankan. So then they tried to identify so-and-so as a member of this or that group, which I did not like. So, from that day onwards, I did not accept the post of administrative secretary, or of any office.

Velan expressed the same opinion:

(FB): You're not involved with Onriyam any more?

(Velan): No, because after the election, when WTM began to have strong involvement, we had to obey their orders at work. That I don't like.

(FB): Because it's compromising your own ideas?

(Velan): They put their fingers into everything you are doing. Their politics affects what you are doing. So you explain to them what you are doing, and totally ignore it [the politics]. You don't want to get involved in further problems. What we don't want is a bitter and violent community. We want a peaceful place here. There are some incidents that took place here and there, threatening people, this and that, but I say no,

that's not the way it should be. Even in my country, there must be first freedom. If you think something, you must be able to speak. So stopping the other people's ideas is no good.

Shakti, the head of the *Onriyam* women's association at the time of the "take-over," was concerned that the cultural activities of the women's group were being interfered with, because under the new *Onriyam* administration, some of her own executive members had been moved onto the *Onriyam* executive, effectively undermining the power of the women's group. Furthermore, she felt that some of the executive of *Onriyam* affiliated with Joseph were presenting an anti-Hindu bias in dealings with the association, and that a Tamil cultural association must necessarily be able to include celebrations of Hinduism.

This was most clearly felt by those involved with the 1988 Navarāttiri celebrations, and the *Onriyam* executive's opposition to the festival being celebrated in the *Onriyam* building:

(Shakti): In October we planned to have this Navarāttiri. At the meeting I asked them whether it could be done, and Father Joseph said yes. But later, pressure was applied, I don't know by whom, and he revoked his permission. But in the meantime we had already made the arrangements. They [the *Onriyam* executive] said it shouldn't take place in *Onriyam*, because they said we don't want any religious functions here. They used to have their Christmas party. *Onriyam* had a Christmas party every year, and all these children, the majority were Hindus, and they would go, sing hymns, and they were given presents. That was a tradition they had built up and no one interfered with that. But it was always held in different places [other than *Onriyam*]. In various

church halls. They said nothing religious was ever done in this office and we said okay, we'll take another room somewhere else. So we did -- in the same building, but upstairs.

And we started everything, and you know you have to establish that *niraikuṭam* to sow the nine grains,¹ and so on, and all that was done. And this man [Joseph] was set up by someone, I don't know who. You know, there are some very narrow-minded Christians, they were in that group. And Father Joseph told the landlord to stop all this 'nonsense,' it's not being done by *Onriyam*, just lock up the place and take the key. He stopped the ceremony. The other members were opposed to this [to the decision to stop the festival], and they were determined to see it through. And they had it [the festival] for ten days.

Every day, I asked one woman member or the other to take charge of preparing the food that was necessary, the offering, and she would go there and be in charge of the puja for that day, and the music teacher would bring some of the children along, and we had the puja. We would sing devotional songs, and after that the *piracātam* was distributed to all those who came, many of the men also came, men, women, children, in that room.

The place was decorated very nicely. Until then, I didn't know that they had pictures of all the Hindu gods and goddesses in the *Onriyam* office. No one told us about that. It had happened that some years back, at that initial stage [of *Onriyam*] there was a Hindu president and somehow he had got pictures done -- the whole set of large, beautiful pictures with gold frames, done for *Onriyam*. And then the pictures were hung up inside the office. But when this man [Joseph] became president, he said everything should be removed and they were all packed away somewhere. And no one talked about it.

Then in spite of all of this, we had the puja. I think mine was the first day, or something like that. Each of the others took a day. In fact sometimes there were two women -- we used to combine two or three women to bring the food, and it was really enjoyed by everyone. It was the first time it had been done in Montreal. Nobody had done this *kolu* before. *Navarāttiri* was celebrated in that manner for the first time

¹Once planted, the nine grains must not be moved.

anywhere I think, outside a temple. It had never been done elsewhere. Everyone else was, they appreciated it. But the unpleasantness began over that issue. So that October I decided to quit.

In response to the perceived "take-over" of the community associations by the WTM, the organization *Tēṭakam* was formed in January 1990, with a mandate of providing an equally political counter-voice to the World Tamil Movement. It involved a group of about fifteen to twenty young men and was formed as a branch of the *Tēṭakam* organization in Toronto, which had over 100 members at the time. The Montreal *Tēṭakam* was informally organized, with no constitution or executive and no hierarchy of members. Those involved had little or no experience with organizations, and recruited Sivan and Velan, two experienced culture keepers with a sympathy for the political standpoint of the *Tēṭakam* "boys,"¹ to help them with the initial stages of organization. The main activity of *Tēṭakam* was their newspaper *Tēṭal*, which was devoted to opposing the views of the WTM and the LTTE. Five issues in total were published. The group folded after just one year. Its failure was said to be partly due to lack of funding, and partly to organizational problems. The membership had been a fluctuating one, ranging from five to 25 men involved

¹This is significant only because many others in the community assumed that *Tēṭakam* was actually organized and operated by these two men -- in fact, they were only in the background, helping out.

at any given time and, of the original group of men, half had moved to Toronto, leaving the others with little knowledge of how to manage the organization, and no external funding to keep up with the expenses.

5.5 Uniting the Community.

There are many sub-themes running through the ideological divide within the community: Hinduism versus Christianity, the male executive of *Onriyam* versus the women's group, LTTE supporters versus those who oppose the activities of the militant group, and, as well, personal rivalries. For each of the culture keepers involved, then, there are personal motivations which feed into their stance of wanting either to affirm Tamil culture in Canada, or affirm it in an independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka.

Some of the people in the Tamil community are aware that these two perspectives exist and are strong supporters of one side or the other. There are those who are members of the WTM, who donate money to help the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka, and who feel that it is not necessary to take time out of their busy lives to be involved in "cultural" activities in Montreal. Similarly, there are those actively involved in "cultural" activities -- for example, writing and producing dramas, or teaching the children Hinduism -- who are adamantly opposed to the efforts of the militant groups in Sri Lanka and to the work of the WTM.

Most of the people in the community do not know about or do not care about either perspective. Most of the people in the community are not actively involved with promoting or preserving Tamil culture -- they are bearers of a culture, but not recognized as experts on culture. When I asked how many people in the community were directly involved in "cultural activities," one of the leaders told me that only about five percent of the community were involved, and that the others simply do not care, although they all like to attend the *kalai vilās*. The culture keepers on both sides of the community divide see this as a real problem, since without the support of the community at large working to continue their culture, the culture will be lost. These are the people to whom the culture keepers on both sides of the divide appeal, largely through editorials in their publications, to unite under their leadership for the well-being of all Tamils. The following two excerpts, one from *Onriyam*, and one from the Canada Tamil Cultural Association, illustrate this call for unity:

"From the President"

The thousands of Tamils here must unite. It is to foster unity, carry out our duties, and make known our past greatness and present grievances, that *Onriyam* was formed. It is the child of the Tamils in Canada. Care advice, help and affection are all necessary for a baby's growth. Increased membership will prove our interest in the welfare of all. To strengthen our power in order to reduce our suffering we must unite and work through *Onriyam*. Let us try and live for others, not only for ourselves. Let us make Tamil and the Tamils grow and develop. Therein lies fulfilment.

To achieve this, you must take an interest in this democratically elected body, *Onriyam*. You must attend its meetings, voice your opinions and give suggestions and become pillars of the society. Though the faults be many, a child is a child to its mother, not a villain. *Onriyam* is doing all that lies within its power and is looking to you for patronage, interest, and enthusiastic support. After much suffering and heartbreak, we have come here to brighten our darkened lives through hard mental and physical work. We can not forget one thing, whatever our age of wherever we may have come from. We must not forget it: that is the greatness of our race (*Tamil Eliḷ Puraṭṭāci*, 1985 [excerpt]).

* * *

"Naratar's Visit"

Sage Naratar visits Brahmaloḷa and tells Goddess Sarasvati the news that the Tamils in Canada are celebrating her festival. She is saddened to hear that they have gone there as refugees. He reassures her that they have been made quite comfortable there and are busy spreading the Tamil word through all through the media. 'But,' he says, 'there is one flaw -- they are not united. Today's festival is different. The organizers have broken new ground and formed a new society.'

It is their festival that he is going to witness. The goddess blesses him and sends a message to the new group asking them to get the rest to unite (Canada Tamil Cultural Association, *Kalai Viḷā* programme, September 1989 [summarized]).

The culture keepers on both sides of the divide are concerned with "culture" in its sense of *kalāccāram*. This is "culture" in its "authenticated" sense -- as song, dance, and the concepts of the classical literature. Both sides make use of funding from the federal and provincial departments of multiculturalism -- often to host the *kalai viḷā* evening stage programmes -- in order to strengthen

their organization to ensure the preservation of Tamil culture.

In the next chapter I will argue that although the two sides of the community divide are promoting different "stated" ideologies of culture to the Tamil community, both sides are promoting culture in its "authenticated" sense, which is congruent with the concept of culture implicit in the federal policy of multiculturalism.

CHAPTER SIX: THE INTERPRETATIONS OF CULTURE

"Dedication"

The new year is born. The years fly. The tribulations of the Eelam Tamils continue like an endless serial story. Tamil is ancient. So are the Tamil festivals and cultural traditions -- they have histories with depths of meaning behind them. Eelam Tamils live in many foreign countries. Our descendants are going to live in a different cultural environment. At this time, by celebrating our cultural festivals from time to time, we are sure to get a chance to tell them about our cultural history. The thought that our enemies slaughter and pile our people in heaps made us leave our country. Let us resolve anew that our future generations will grow with the knowledge of three-fold *Caṅkam* Tamil and our culture (*Tamil Elil cittirai*, 1989).

Nations are not natural entities but modern inventions created out of a reconstructed mythical past and a purported common cultural identity (Handler 1988, Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Smith 1992). In this chapter I argue that the image of "authenticated culture" promoted in the Canadian multiculturalism policy is compatible with the concept of *kalāccāram* being promoted by Tamil community culture keepers. I argue that this is because they arose in similar contexts: for the Tamils, in the context of Dravidian nationalism, British colonialism in South Asia,

and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Sinhalese; and for the Canadian government, in the context of Quebec nationalism, the increase in "Third World" immigrants, and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Americans. Both concepts of culture are grounded in colonialist constructions of the "other" and both reflect an effort by the elites of the "nation" to promote a firmly bounded and distinct culture, coterminous with ethnic identity.

I begin with a discussion of nationalism, and the way in which "authenticated culture" emerges out of efforts to create a mythical past and common identity. I then turn to the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, which emerged as a means of unifying the nation around the common identity of the ethnic mosaic. I examine the historical context within which the symbol of the ethnic mosaic became so central to Canadian identity, and the academic and public debates around whether the "authenticated" culture being promoted through the ethnic mosaic model is in fact a positive force in Canadian society.

I then turn to an analysis of the way in which the Tamil concept of *kalāccāram* intersects with the concept of "culture" being promoted by multiculturalism, focusing on one of the more obvious ways in which the two constructions of culture intersect -- the evening cultural programmes, or *kalai viḷā*. I conclude by analyzing why the Tamil culture keepers make active use of the policy of multiculturalism,

arguing they do so not only because it enhances access to resources controlled by the state, but because the promotion of "authenticated culture" in multiculturalism meets with the Tamils' own agendas for promoting and preserving a distinct Tamil culture.

6.1 Nationalism and Authenticated Culture.

The concept of culture evolved in close association with the concepts of nation and ethnicity (Williams 1981), during a period when some European nations were contending for dominance while others were striving for separate identities and for independence. Nations or ethnic groups were perceived to possess a distinctive culture, which served to legitimate the political goal of forming a separate and independent state. The concept of culture is thus directly relevant to any discussion of nationalism and ethnicity, and any discussion of nationalism or ethnicity must take into account the new uses of and forms of the notion of "culture" -- what Wolf refers to as the dismantling and re-assembling of cultural forms (Wolf 1982:387).

Theorists of nationalism agree that the nation is an invented category, with roots in neither nature nor the distant past. Nations and nationalism are a phenomenon of modernity and the past to which nationalists aspire is mythical and usually fabricated for present political

purposes (Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Smith 1992). Anderson uses the term "imagined communities" to describe nations, because the members of the nation will never know most of their fellow-members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1983:15).

The birth and diffusion of nationalism has been greatly influenced by the ethnic revival movement, and the reverse is also true (Smith 1981). The ethnic revival movement has been dated to the late 1950s, when Breton, Basque, Catalan and Québécois movements first emerged (Smith 1981:20). In the 1940s and 1950s the areas of study of nationalism and ethnicity were separate, but the ethnic revival movement led to a reassessment of both ethnicity and nationalism and to the realization that they were intimately related (Smith 1992:1).

More recently, then, the terms "nationalism" and "ethnicity" are inextricably related, and are often used interchangeably. For instance, Connor coined the term "ethnonationalism," and uses the term interchangeably with nationalism (Connor 1984); Smith uses the phrase "ethnic nationalism," and argues that no nation can be formed without creating an ethnic culture (Smith 1981:18). He defines an ethnic group as "a social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim a common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more distinctive characteristics, and feel a sense of collective

uniqueness and solidarity" (Smith 1981:66).

Like nationalism, ethnicity is concerned with language as an identity marker, with the image of the homeland (whether real or imagined¹), and with the existence of an identifiable culture. As with nationalist movements, ethnic separatism is based on the notion of shared unique cultural ties which serve to demarcate one group of people from others. Separatism is therefore seen as not only an end in itself, but as a means of protecting the cultural identity formed by those unique cultural ties (Smith 1981:13).

Central to the development of nationalism and ethnicity is the "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:14). Invented traditions are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, and "traditions" which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:1-2). The invention of tradition for nationalism and ethnicity involves a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by a reference to the past (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Handler 1988).

Nations and ethnic groups, revolving around a common

¹Ethnicity in the West involves a homeland which is not necessarily a fixed geographical entity, but rather an "imagined homeland (Jayawardena 1980:430, Gupta and Ferguson 1992:7, Smith 1981:69).

"culture" and history, need myths and legends of a common past and images of a common cultural identity to construct themselves. "Myths" are stories which are regarded as true, which narrate a sacred history, and which establish and justify human conduct and activity; they supply models for human behaviour. "Legends," by contrast, are stories of heroes in recent history which are told as if they were true, but which may or not be true. Myths concern people directly, while tales and legends and fables refer to events that, even when they have caused changes in the world, have not altered the human condition as such (e.g., Eliade 1963:3-13). Nationalists and leaders of ethnic revival movements look back to a golden age, sometimes to an original ancestry; in some cases, the myth of common descent has been given specific content through ties to a legendary figure; often there are stories of how and when their people established themselves in their homeland and the events which led them to have the national character and culture that they have (Connor 1984, Handler 1988, Kapferer 1988a, Smith 1992).

The processes by which certain myths are put forward, with certain understandings of one's cultural traditions being privileged while others are delegitimated, are structured in part by macropolitical structures, but are implicated, inscribed and articulated at the micropolitical level of everyday practices. Arising out of the

"commonsensical" structures of one's cultural and historical context, the myths of nationalist or ethnic movements operate at the level of everyday culture, engaging a reasoning which is integral to everyday realities and part of the "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977). Everyday cultural practices are the locus of both domination and transformation (De Certeau 1984), and thus the processes by which traditions are constructed, maintained, and challenged are not uniform or univocal. People who are actively reconstructing their cultural traditions may draw upon the myths and legends of contrasting or even conflicting models of identity, from multiple culturally and historically shaped traditions.

6.2 The Myth of Multiculturalism.

In Canada, the myth of a common cultural identity is constructed out of difference, rather than cultural homogeneity.¹ The Canadian multiculturalism policy emerged as a means of unifying the nation around the common identity of the ethnic mosaic. Canada has always needed immigrants to survive economically, but has been forced to balance this need against public outcry over the influx of immigrants

¹Gupta (1992) also illustrates how some nationalist narratives may acknowledge, and sometimes celebrate, difference, creating a union through difference. He contrasts nations with other forms of "imagined community," focusing on the Nonaligned Movement (among Third World African and Asian countries) and the European Community as examples of different forms of imagined community.

whose cultural identity is seen to be radically different from that of the Anglophone and Francophone majorities. The policy thus emerged out of efforts to defuse mounting Québécois pressure on federalism and to cope with the influx of immigrants to Canada. In keeping with nationalist movements which refer back to a common origin and a common culture, then, multiculturalism is promoted as an integral part of Canadian cultural identity -- it is the cultural tie which binds Canadians together ("unity in diversity") and sets them apart culturally from other nations.

Central to the Canadian myth of multiculturalism is the symbol of the ethnic mosaic -- the notion of cultural groups in Canada existing side by side, firmly bounded and homogeneous within. The model of the ethnic mosaic is promoted to immigrants and refugees arriving into Canada as something which is real, shared by all Canadians, and representative of what Canadians are. Canadians have come to believe that unlike the United States, where visible minorities become part of an "ethnic melting pot" and blend into mainstream society, in Canada they form an "ethnic mosaic," and retain their cultural boundaries, which separate them out from other cultural groups and from regular, "non-ethnic" Canadians.

The symbol of the "ethnic mosaic" emerged and became central to Canadian identity largely through sociological and anthropological research on ethnicity in Canada. One of

the most important links between federal multiculturalism policies and procedures and the academic community has been through the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, an interdisciplinary organization devoted to the study of ethnicity, multiculturalism, immigration, intergroup relations, and the cultural life of ethnic groups in Canada. The association has the support of, and is subsidized by, the federal Department of Multiculturalism.¹

For most of its history, Canadian ethnic studies has been dominated by sociologists (Henry 1976), and its influences can be traced to sociological studies of ethnicity at Chicago, which in turn influenced Canadian sociologists (Driedger 1989, Herberg 1989, Sharma 1991). This gave rise to two competing theoretical perspectives within Canadian approaches to ethnic studies -- one is the "assimilationist" perspective, which reflects the American image of the melting pot; and the other is the "survivalist"

¹For instance in spring of 1991, a conference on "Twenty Years of Multiculturalism: Successes and Failures" was sponsored by Multiculturalism Canada and involved participants from all academic disciplines involved in Canadian ethnic studies (Canadian Ethnic Studies Association 1991). As well, the Department of Multiculturalism funds research on ethnic groups in Canada through its Heritage Cultures and Languages Programme, sponsors the social science and medical researchers who make up the Canadian Council on Multicultural Health (Canadian Council on Multicultural Health 1989), and has recently initiated a project with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to assess the strengths and weaknesses of current research and resources dealing with research on multiculturalism in Canada (Canadian Ethnic Studies Association 1990:3).

or "pluralist" perspective, which reflects the Canadian image of the mosaic (Anderson and Frideres 1981, Weinfeld 1981, Berry 1987, Sharma 1991). Under the impact of federal multicultural and bilingual concerns, the pluralist perspective eventually became the dominant model for ethnic studies research (Sharma 1991). Thus most of the research on identity is concerned with questions of the survival of ethnic groups in Canadian society, focusing on issues such as how ethnic identity varies across generations, among ethnic groups, or across regions in Canada (Isajiw 1975; O'Bryan et al. 1976; Aoki et al. 1978; Berry 1987; Driedger 1989, 1987, 1978, 1977, 1975; Ujimoto 1990; Weinfeld 1981); ethnic boundaries and "institutional completeness"¹ (Breton 1964, Breton et al. 1975, Herberg 1989, Rosenberg and Jedwab 1992); ethnic group survival in the face of dominant social control mechanisms (Anderson and Frideres 1981), and the relationship between ethnicity and class (e.g., Porter 1965, Lautard and Guppy 1990).

The Canadian nationalist image of the ethnic mosaic arises out of and is inextricably linked with Quebec nationalism as well as the nationalisms of various ethnic

¹The concept of "institutional completeness" is based on the theory that the maintenance of a group's identity is directly related to the group's ability to maintain its boundaries, and these boundaries in turn depend on the range of ethnic organizational structures that the community operates. Thus, ethnic development is seen to fall on a continuum such that some ethnic communities have no organizations, while others may have as many organizations as there are in the wider community (Breton 1964).

groups in Canada. Aided by academic writings on ethnicity, this has led to the promotion of an image of "culture" in multiculturalism which is "authenticated" and coterminous with ethnicity.

6.3 Multiculturalism: A Case of "Myth"-taken Identity?

The emphasis on "authenticated" culture in Canadian multiculturalism has led to intense debate and criticism, both from the general public and within academic circles, over whether multiculturalism is an appropriate model for constructing Canadian identity (e.g., Brotz 1980, Peter 1981, Weinfeld 1981, Roberts and Clifton 1982, Kallen 1982, Moodley 1983, Breton 1984, Bibby 1990, Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992, Fleras and Elliott 1992).

The debate can be roughly categorized into three separate arguments based on perceptions of the policy as: (1) a negative force in Canadian society because it co-opts visible minorities, (2) a positive force because it empowers visible minorities, (3) a negative force because it empowers visible minorities and thus is divisive to Canadian society.

(1) Those who support the first argument believe that the policy is a means of disguising institutional racism and individual prejudice. They argue that the policy depoliticizes and co-opts visible minorities, ignores evidence of a racially stratified society, and keeps the leaders of cultural communities placated by giving overt

public support to the preservation of cultural traditions, thus reducing inequities to folklore (Anderson and Frideres 1981, Dahlie and Fernando 1981, Kallen 1982, Kanungo 1984, Moodley 1983, Peter 1981, Bolaria and Li 1988, Li and Bolaria 1983).

(2) Others believe that the policy indicates a move away from anglo-conformity and racism, toward a more egalitarian pluralism. These theorists believe that the focus on folklore and ethnicity is a positive aspect of the policy because it unites and empowers visible minorities (Burnet 1987, Burnet and Palmer 1988, Abu-Laban and Stasiulis, 1992).

(3) A third perspective is that there is a tension between the ideals of multiculturalism and Canadian unity. The policy is perceived as being detrimental to Canadian society, and the affirmation of symbols of cultural identity, such as the wearing of turbans by Sikh RCMP officers, is said to detract from a united Canadian culture. Supporters of this argument include Bibby (1990), and the Reform Party of Canada (in Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992). This perspective is reinforced by many people within the Canadian general public, who target multiculturalism as being one of the reasons for national political disintegration (in Mullens 1991:54).

Charles Taylor (1992) has argued that the debate in both the United States and in Canada over multiculturalism

is essentially one of the "politics of equal dignity" versus the "politics of difference" and that these two perspectives are inherently irreconcilable (Taylor 1992). Using Taylor's dichotomy, the first and second arguments over the Canadian policy of multiculturalism -- the view that the policy co-opts visible minorities, and the view that it promotes egalitarian pluralism -- both fall within Taylor's "politics of difference" perspective, in which we have to recognize and even foster particularity. The first position is that the policy does not go far enough in supporting pluralism, and the second holds that the policy effectively promotes a pluralist society.

The third argument outlined above -- the assimilationist perspective -- falls within the "politics of equal dignity" perspective, in which the principle of equal respect requires that we treat people in a difference-blind fashion. This position is that the various cultural identities in Canada should not be valorized, because all Canadians should be individuals within a "Canadian culture."

While the issue of "individualism versus pluralism" is certainly inherent in these arguments, I contend that to conflate the Canadian and American debates over multiculturalism, glossing them as the politics of individualism versus pluralism, is to obfuscate a much more crucial issue in the Canadian debates. In Canada, the central argument is whether folklore ("authenticated

culture") can and should be used by members of minority groups as an idiom of resistance against the cultural hegemony of the French and English charter groups.

6.4 "Culture" and Multiculturalism.

The Canadian debate over multiculturalism is markedly different from its American counterpart. In the American debate, "culture" is taken to mean "authenticated" cultural forms of art, literature, or music (Turner 1993:417),¹ but the implications of this focus on "authenticated" culture never arise. The American debate centres on the proposed inclusion of multicultural curricula in undergraduate education. On one side of the debate are those who argue for the introduction of "multicultural" materials, believing that it helps to equalize power relations between visible minorities and the dominant Anglophone majority. On the other side are those who are against the introduction of multicultural content, believing that to do so would detract from the common culture of America and from the rights of individuals (Gutman 1992, Giroux 1992, Turner 1993, Taylor

¹Turner is critical of arguments made on both sides of the American debate over multiculturalism, for this reason. He argues that those who propose a multiculturalist curriculum want to avoid a focus on Eurocentric "high culture," but in doing so, adopt an opposition conception of minority "cultures" which continues to focus on "high cultural forms of art, literature, or music, and thus leave the notion of culture as high culture unchallenged (Turner 1993:417).

1992).

Terence Turner has analyzed the meaning of "culture" in American multiculturalism, and contends that this focus on the "authenticated" aspect of culture -- what he terms "high culture" -- is due to the context within which the issue of multiculturalism emerged in the United States. There, multiculturalism has been influenced by the field of "cultural studies," which is concerned with subcultures, media, and genres of representation of groups on the margins of the hegemonic classes and status groups of British and American society. Thus, in the United States, multiculturalism has become an ideological vehicle for ethnic nationalism and "identity politics," and a favoured idiom of political mobilization for resistance against central political authorities and the hegemony of the national culture (Turner 1993:423).

In the United States, then, "multiculturalism" implies the political empowerment of minorities. Multiculturalism serves to link all of the cultural "others" together in a united resistance against the hegemonic national culture, and thus represents a "metaculture," or "culture of cultures" (Turner 1993:424). Many argue that the liberal philosophy of uniting all marginalized voices into a univocal "other" in fact serves to reinforce their marginalization and effectively silences them (e.g., Spivak 1990, Bhabha 1990).

In Canada, multiculturalism has been implemented by the state, rather than by ethnic community leaders. Multiculturalism is being promoted by the dominant culture to encourage individual groups to assert their cultural heritage (by providing support for heritage languages, public displays of culture, and so on), reinforcing the idea that each individual group is distinct from the other minority cultural communities, and from the dominant French and English cultures. Thus, instead of multiculturalism referring to the empowerment of a unified minority voice against the hegemony of the dominant culture, as it does in the United States, in Canada it is precisely this issue of whether the focus on "authenticated" culture in multiculturalism does unite and empower minorities which is at the heart of the dispute.

For those who believe the policy co-opts visible minorities, the policy is seen to focus on "folklore" and not sufficiently on issues of racism and human rights, common to all minority groups, and thus placates minorities by giving overt support, while in fact not empowering them. For instance, Dahlie and Fernando describe the policy of multiculturalism as a "mechanism of exclusion in the guise of inclusion" (1981:2); Bolaria states that "multiculturalism is the failure of an illusion, not of a policy" (1985:30); and Ryga criticizes the policy for not extending itself to research of ethnic abuse or racism

(1986:78).

The second argument outlined above -- that the policy is a positive move toward egalitarian pluralism -- maintains that the focus on folklore is a positive aspect of the policy because it serves to empower minority groups.

Multiculturalism allows for a more inclusionary political discourse than either liberal individualist or two-nations models of Canadian society, providing legitimacy for both the presence and the articulation of concerns of ethnic minority collectivities. As such, the policy is both relevant and necessary in the contemporary Canadian context and for the future (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:367).

The third perspective -- that multiculturalism is incompatible with Canadian unity -- also holds that the focus on folklore serves to empower minority groups, but that this is detrimental to the unity of Canadian society. While this perspective is most commonly seen in the public sphere, expressed in terms of the threat of minority cultures toward Canadian culture, it also receives support in the form of some academic writings. For instance, Bibby asks the question of whether pluralism, by legitimizing everything, in the end creates nothing except coexistence, and whether it is therefore a threat to collective life.

When a country like Canada enshrines pluralism through policies such as multiculturalism and bilingualism and the guaranteeing of individual rights, the outcome is coexistence -- no more, no less....Rather than coexistence being the foundation that enables a diverse nation to collectively pursue the best kind of existence possible, coexistence degenerates into a national preoccupation. Pluralism ceases to have a cause.

The result: mosaic madness (Bibby 1992:103-104).

Unlike in the United States, then, multiculturalism is not directly identified with the empowerment of minorities, and the debate over multiculturalism is not centrally one of pluralism versus individualism. Of those who support pluralism in Canada, some believe that the focus on "authenticated cultures" gives visible minorities a tool with which to empower themselves; others see the multiculturalism as a tool of the state, co-opting minority groups by granting them "symbolic power," thereby ensuring that they do not challenge the hegemony of the dominant French and English cultures.¹ In both Canada and the United States, the debates over whether "multiculturalism" is a positive or negative force in society are based on the assumption that the ideology of multiculturalism shapes whether and how the ethnic "others" are defining and empowering themselves.

I contend, following Young (1983), Taussig (1987), Comaroff and Comaroff (1991), and others, that ideologies do not function in such a univocal and unilinear fashion. If we turn from a concern with whether and how multiculturalism defines and empowers minority groups, toward how individuals

¹On this issue, even ethnocultural leaders who are Members of Parliament for the Liberal Party -- the party which introduced the policy in 1971 -- are split over whether the policy should be retained (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992:380).

are defining their own culture and cultural boundaries using the idiom of multiculturalism (as Dusenbury [1981] has urged), it is obvious that "multiculturalism," despite the intent with which it was introduced by the state, will necessarily be reinterpreted by its user. "Culture" is a term which is itself culturally embedded and historically shaped, and thus the way in which "multiculturalism" is used and understood will vary significantly from person to person and from group to group. Multiculturalism is a symbol which is free-floating and multifaceted, and can be reshaped and put to use in various ways, to support contrasting or even conflicting models of cultural identity. Furthermore, because it is a signifier which is "unfixed" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:18), the relationship between multiculturalism as a government ideology and policy, and multiculturalism as an idiom for identity construction and/or empowerment, is dialectic -- multiculturalism both shapes, and is shaped by, how "others" construct themselves.

6.5 Kalāccāram and Multiculturalism.

The process of migration involves a unique way of constructing cultural identity, since it sunders the fixed association between identity, culture, and place (Appadurai 1991, Bottomley 1992, Gupta 1992, Malkki 1992). The Tamils' status as political refugees in Canada means that their situation is unlike that of more established immigrant

communities. For those groups, as the debates over multiculturalism illustrate, the chief concern may indeed be whether the policy is useful for uniting minority groups to combat racism and political and economic inequality. For the Sri Lankan Tamils -- and perhaps for other refugees who are fleeing a civil war fought along nationalist lines -- the nationalist agenda remains central, and the major concern is how to maintain their distinct cultural identity as Jaffna Tamils.

For Tamils in Montreal, identity is (re)constructed out of the intersecting traditions of Canadian nationalism, with its image of an ethnic mosaic, and Jaffna Tamil nationalism, with its image of "pure" Tamil language and culture (*kalāccāram*). Tamils actively involved in reaffirming "Tamilness" do so at the juncture of these nationalisms, but in ways that are specific to their situation in the province of Quebec. The Tamils in Montreal are sympathetic to Québécois nationalism, and often draw parallels between the Tamil and Québécois movements to safeguard the language, religion, and culture of their nation. Despite their sympathy for Québécois nationalism, however, the tension in Quebec government policies between the ideals of multiculturalism and the ideals of preserving a distinct Québécois language and culture, is felt by Tamils reconstructing their cultural identity in Montreal. They are conscious of the fact that Quebec has its own,

dominating, nationalist agenda of affirming itself as distinct from Anglophone Canadian culture. The Tamils are particularly concerned that support for their own affirmation of a distinct language and culture is being threatened by some provincial policies, such as the policy requiring that newcomers to Quebec attend school in French.¹

For Tamils actively involved in (re)constructing their cultural identity, the multiculturalism policy is seen as an ideal forum for maintaining cultural cohesiveness. They make active use of the policy of multiculturalism, applying for funding for the community associations, participating in inter-cultural events sponsored at both the provincial and federal levels, and acting on multicultural committees as representatives of their community. For those on the "political" side of the Tamil community divide, the multiculturalism policy is an ideal way of raising funds to send to the "boys" fighting for Eelam, thus ensuring that the Tamil culture will be preserved in the homeland. For those on the "cultural" side of the community divide, the policy provides an ideal forum for preserving and promoting Tamil language and culture to the children being born and raised in Canada. This active involvement with the ideology

¹This will be clarified in Chapter Seven. Many Tamils move from Montreal to English speaking parts of Canada, believing that children will be better able to communicate with their elders, for whom English may already be a second language.

and policy of multiculturalism is, then, in part because access to resources controlled by the state is enhanced. It is also, however, because the image of "*kalāccāram*" being promoted by culture keepers on both sides of the community divide is congruent with the "authenticated culture" being promoted by the Canadian policy of multiculturalism.

One of the most obvious ways in which the two constructions of culture as "authenticated" culture intersect, is in the evening cultural programmes, or *kalai viḷā*, which are one of the social highlights in the Tamil community. The culture keepers know that the surest way to obtain funding for classes in Tamil or Hinduism, or to lend financial support to the "boys" fighting for Eelam, is by hosting *kalai viḷā* and charging admission. When these concerts are held as a celebration of a Hindu festival, multiculturalism funding may be applied for to cover the costs of production, since the programme is considered to be a celebration of cultural heritage.

Four major *kalai viḷā* are held every year, each hosted by a different community organization. *Onriyam* is responsible for the *Puttāṇṇu viḷā* (the New Year festival); the Saiva Mission for the *Poṅkal viḷā* (the harvest festival); the Canada Tamil Cultural Association for *Vāni viḷā* (as part of the worship of Vani or Sarasvati, associated with Navarattiri); and *Oḷi* for *Muttamiḷ viḷā*, which is a general celebration of Tamil culture. Besides

these four occasions, other *kalai vilā* are held to raise money for individual community organizations. Not only does the entertainment bring together the entire community in support of the sponsoring association, but the preparations for the event -- involving the children, their parents, artists and association leaders -- are seen as an ideal way to pass on the Tamil language and culture to the children, and a way of reaffirming culture to the adults (who the culture keepers believe would care little otherwise about maintaining their cultural traditions).

The evening programmes are quite similar to each other in content and format. They are held in rented high school auditoriums, and usually have audiences of anywhere from 300 to 1,000 people (the largest I have attended had an audience of 1500 people). The programmes begin in late afternoon or early evening (anywhere from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) and last approximately three hours. Some tickets are sold in advance by the programme organizers, while others are bought at the door. The programme begins with the lighting of the *vilakkum* (oil lamps) at the front of the stage and the singing of the invocation to the gods. This is followed by a welcome address by the president of the organization which is sponsoring the event. The welcome address is then translated into English and French for the benefit of any "Canadian" guests who may be present. Often this is followed by a brief speech about the meaning of the

festival, done by three teenagers in English, French and Tamil. This is followed by speeches by the honoured guests -- Members of Parliament or Members of the National Assembly (the provincial government body) who are responsible for multiculturalism.

The actual programmes are varied and entertaining, and solely in the Tamil language. Events almost invariably include classical *bhārata nāṭyam*; Tamil folk dancing; a children's drama, in which a story from the Tamil classics is re-enacted; one or two humorous skits by adult men (often ad-libbed, usually poking fun at the Canadian immigration policy, or the struggles over getting family members here); a comedy sketch (often involving a man dressed as a woman, doing a soliloquy); a serious drama by adults (often re-enacting a piece from the Tamil classical literature); a musical item (traditional); "light music" (Indian film music, also known as "Ceylon pop"); sometimes a "fancy dress" competition by children (this is a common feature of the Ponkal festival -- children dress up as Tamil saints or mythic heroes, and every child receives a prize); and occasionally a formal debate on politics in Sri Lanka.

For the Canadian and Quebec multiculturalism officials who attend the *kalai viḷā*, the programmes are seen as a means for the Tamils to affirm their cultural heritage and their place in the Canadian ethnic mosaic. The following two messages, written by Canadian government officials and

reprinted in the programme for the 1990 *poṅkal viḷā*,
illustrate this "official" view:

Your festival is an ideal opportunity to demonstrate your pride in what you, as loyal Canadian citizens, have given to Canada...[it creates] valuable bridges of intercultural understanding and appreciation...[and]...promotes cultural diversity (message from Gerry Weiner, Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship, *poṅkal* programme, Saiva Mission of Quebec, 1990).

* * *

This celebration is a great opportunity for you to reflect on your cultural heritage and the many contributions of your community to make a stronger Canada (message from local Member of Parliament Fernand Jourdenais, *poṅkal* programme, Saiva Mission of Quebec, 1990).

In the *kalai viḷā*, the Canadian and Tamil ideologies of "culture" as authenticated culture intersect. For the Tamil culture keepers, this is an "emic authenticated" view of culture; for federal policy makers, it is an "etic authenticated" view of culture. Both are promoting classical dance, the epics, Hinduism, and so on -- a reified and fossilized culture which can be discussed and analyzed, and which is being promoted to the Tamil community and to Canadians by both the Tamil community culture keepers and the government policy makers.

The "emic authenticated" view of culture has its source in Dravidian nationalism, British colonialism in South Asia (and its associated theories of race), and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Sinhalese. The "etic

authenticated" image has its source in the ethnic revival movement of the 1950s and 60s (spurred on by the work of social scientists writing about ethnic identity in Canada), in the context of Quebec nationalism and the increase in "Third World" immigrants, and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Americans.

Both concepts draw upon images of progress and refinement: for the multiculturalists, this is because modernist notions of "popular culture" as art, literature, and so on, are retained in the concept; for the Tamils, this is because the concept of "*paṇpaṭu*" -- culture in the sense of one who has culture -- draws upon images of progress and the terminology of crop breeding and improvement to create an image of personal control and refinement. Both concepts of culture, then, are grounded in colonialist constructions of the "other" and both reflect an effort by elites of the "nation" to promote a firmly bounded and distinct culture, coterminous with ethnic identity.

In the next two chapters, I will take an explicitly authoritative stance, as an outsider observer looking in at the Tamil community, in order to examine the "cultural field" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:27) in which everyday concepts of *kalāccāram* are grounded. I will illustrate how Canadian and Quebec traditions and ideologies of culture are implicated in everyday notions of Tamilness, but debated, understood, and constructed in ways specific to the Tamils'

own culturally shaped and historically embedded concept of culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SAFEGUARDING MOTHER TAMIL

From ancient times, Tamils have made a fundamental distinction between pure Tamil language (*centamiḷ*) and colloquial, impure Tamil (*koṭuntamiḷ*). The reaffirmation of *centamiḷ* as a sacred symbol occurred in the nineteenth century in the early stages of Dravidian nationalism, when there was an attempt to purify the Tamil language of its Sanskritic influence (Pandian 1987:48). Tamil language is diglossic, so that in the spoken language there is a difference between everyday speech and formal speech (used for public speeches and so on), with the latter being the most "pure," or closest to the written form.

It was during the Dravidian movement in India that pure Tamil language came to be strongly equated with pure (chaste) Tamil women and that the language began to be referred to as "Mother Tamil" (Pandian 1987:65).¹ Pandian points out, in his discussion of Dravidian nationalism, that

¹Cutler points out that the most representative emblem of the Fifth International Tamil Research conference, which he witnessed, was this symbol of "Mother Tamil" (Cutler 1983:286).

just as women must retain their purity or chastity to retain their sacredness or spirituality, so too must the Tamil language retain its purity to retain its sacredness or spirituality (Pandian 1987:49). Any alien influence on the language is comparable to the ravishment of one's own mother (Pandian 1987:54). In contemporary nationalist discourse, every Tamil male is expected to protect the sacredness of Tamil womanhood, and to safeguard "Mother Tamil" (Pandian 1987:65).

In this chapter, I examine the "commonsensical" meanings behind "*kalāccāram*." I argue that the culture keepers on both sides of the ideological divide construct authenticated Tamil culture out of concepts and symbols of the ancient *Caṅkam* literature. These concepts and symbols have always been pervasive in everyday thought, but during the renaissance of Tamil literature that was part of the Dravidian movement they were crystallized and spoken about as being central to Tamil identity (Pandian 1987).

In order to interpret the meaning of female "purity" (*karpu*) and its importance for preserving Tamil language and culture in Canada, it is necessary to first explore the commonsensical understanding of "identity" in Tamil culture.

7.1 "Kuṇam" -- The Essence of Being Tamil.

Kuṇam refers to the fundamental quality of a person, including one's moral and spiritual character as well as his

or her bodily "substance" (Daniel 1984:92). The soil, food, words, and all other substances that flow among persons and of which persons are composed contain *kuṇams*.¹ This notion of coded "substances" exchanged in and among persons is central to popular Tamil epistemology (Moreno and Marriott 1989, Daniel 1984).² In this conceptualization, the body is "permeable, composite, partly divisible, and partly transmissible...processes internal to the person are...continuous with processes of exchange between and among persons" (Marriott 1976:194). Boundaries between people are "fluid" (Daniel 1984), and the relationships between people, between a person and the foods which he or she consumes, and between the environment and a person's body, involve exchanges of substances which affect the health and well-being of the persons involved in such exchanges. A person, then, is a "dividual," rather than an "individual" -- identity is extended to include one's spouse, children, kinsmen, caste members, and even extends to include ancestors and ancestral deities (Daniel

¹For instance, the term "*kuṇamaṇi*" refers to a person of excellent character; "*kuṇamākkutal*" means healing, curing, or restoring to health. Similarly, the term *tōṣam*, which refers to troubles or difficulties in life in general, is the same word which is used for defects in the astral realm and imbalances of the bodily humours causing illness.

²I was also told by one of my Montreal Tamil friends who had reviewed Daniel's book on the "fluid body," as well as some of Margaret Trawick's work (1978) that this conception of the body is "correct" and is well known to everyone.

1984:103).

Daniel has shown how substance (*kuṇam*) and action (*karmam*) are interrelated (Daniel 1984:70). A given action alters or becomes a part of the actor in some measure after the actor has performed a specific action. For instance, the relationship between a person and the soil of his or her home village (*ūr*) involves the transfer of *kuṇams*. Since a person drinks the water, eats the food, and performs other actions related to the soil of his or her *ūr*, the soil constitutes that person.

Any disturbance in the *kuṇams* which flow between a person's body and the physical, social, spiritual, or moral realms which affect his or her body has an effect on each of the other realms (Daniel 1984, Zimmerman 1980). As these substances are exchanged and intermingled, so too are the essential attributes of identity and personhood (Daniel 1984, Trawick [Egnor] 1978).

The concept of *kuṇam* can be understood by turning to the metaphysical and philosophical concepts of the South Asian classical medical traditions, Ayurveda and Siddha Medicine. In South Asia, the everyday conceptions of the body and the person are closely aligned with these traditions (Daniel 1984, Moreno and Marriott 1989).

The body is conceived as being made of three *tōṣams* or humours: wind (*vāta*), bile (*pitta*), and phlegm (*kapha*). The wind is responsible for respiration and the limbs; bile for

digestion, body heat, thirst, and hunger; and phlegm for strength (bodily, sexual, and so on). Wind is subdivided into five separate breaths or winds which control the main bodily functions. Wind is light, dry, cold, and ever-moving. Bile is responsible for radiance, appetite, brilliance of digestive fire, well-being, and freedom from illness. It is hot, acrid, and liquid. Phlegm is responsible for the lubrication of the limbs, firmness of the joints, strength, and elation. It is heavy, oily, cold, and motionless (Zimmerman 1987, 1980; Daniel 1974; Dash 1978).

The three humours must be in harmonic balance, but the body is in a perpetual state of flux. When the humours are upset they become *tōṣams*, or troubles of the organism.¹ The crises which cause such imbalances are brought on by the varied cycles of astral time, or by earthly seasons in relation to personal constitution, or by interpersonal events (Zimmerman 1980). When a *tōṣam* is angry or excited it increases in proportion to the other humours, and must be reduced or controlled through healing.

Illnesses caused by an imbalance of the humours are described in terms of the body being overheated or overchilled, and "heating" or "cooling" remedies are intended to counteract the imbalance. Foods also are classified as either "heating" or "cooling," depending on

¹"*Tōṣam*" also means a "defect" in any general sense.

the action they take on the body when consumed (Zimmerman 1980, Dash 1978). Besides foods and illnesses, certain bodily states are associated with "heating" and "cooling." For example, heat is associated with fertility. During puberty, the girl is "hot" because of excess blood which has accumulated in her body and she is given "cooling" foods to restore her body to equilibrium (Beck 1969).

The purpose of healing is to make the environment correspond to the conditions of the body, through manipulating the body in its relation to the environment, both spatial and temporal. This "principle of appropriateness" (Zimmerman 1980) means taking into account several factors in healing, such as the caste of the person, the age of the person, the season and time of day, and the physical location. For instance, the age of the patient is an important consideration in maintaining the balance of the humours, since phlegm is dominant in youth, bile in midlife, and wind in old age. The season is important because phlegm accumulates in the growing season, bile in the rainy season, and wind in cold, dry weather. Similarly, in terms of geographical context, bile corresponds to dry lands and phlegm to moist lands. Bile, the sun, heat, and "femaleness" are seen to sap strength (*rasa*), while phlegm, the moon, unctuousness, and "maleness" replenish. Thus, prescriptions for lifestyle, such as whether one should eat "hot" or "cold" foods, oil the body, sleep in the afternoon

or have little or a lot of sexual activity, must be made appropriate to the time and to the place in order to maintain the balance of the humours (Zimmerman 1980).

This "principle of appropriateness" and the conceptualization of the person as a "dividual," along with the associated idioms of purity and impurity, are key to understanding the importance of *karpu* to maintaining Tamil cultural identity in Canada.

7.2 Karpu in Quebec.

"Even if You Forget Your Mother, Can You Forget Your Mother Tongue?"

The word 'unafraid' seems to be peculiarly applicable to our women in Canada today. It is causing us fear. Our women, who have lived for centuries bearing the marks of fear, ignorance, coyness and reluctance to be touched by men other than their husbands, have broken free of all this. They are totally unafraid. They deny ignorance before or after marriage, say shyness is for the ignorant, and they deem living with the last quality [shyness] equal to being aliens....There are many other changes. Those who should be fostering our language have taken to foreign languages with a vengeance. Two weeks after I had arrived in Canada, I went to an Immigration Office. Not knowing the way, I spoke to two women [Tamils] who were talking to each other in a foreign language [French] using the term 'elu' [vocative] in between words. I addressed one as 'akkā' [elder sister]. They ignored me. At my second attempt, one of them said something in the same foreign language, which sounded very ugly to me. She could have asked, 'What is it, little brother.' I was sorely disappointed. I turned to see a Tamil man smiling at me. He asked me what was wrong and I told him. We reached the metro [subway]. The two women were seated there. They didn't see us. One said 'the poor boy' in the same foreign language. We looked at each other. He told me 'This is just the opening prayer

[meaning beginning] for you. Our women should decide to live in a particular way, not in any old way. Even if you forget your mother, can you forget your mother tongue?' (Tamil Elil paṅkuni, 1990).

The term *karpu* signifies chastity, but evokes a number of associations including sacrifice, suffering, virtue, morality, justice, and asceticism. *Karpu* involves more than sexual fidelity -- it means staying with one's husband no matter how cruel he may be. The word *karpu* is from the Tamil root *kaḷ*, to learn (Hart 1973:243). Besides signifying faithfulness, it also implies an ability to restrain all immodest impulses, and having the *cakti*, or sacred power, which is acquired by doing so (Ibid.).

Cakti is a basic tenet of Hinduism, and refers to the power or energy of the universe which is contained within the mother goddess. The goddess provides the motivating force for the passive inactive male; without the *cakti* of his goddess, no male god can act (Wadley 1980:ix). In classical Hinduism and in the everyday life of traditional Hindus, women's sexuality, like that of the goddess, is feared and must be kept under control by men. Through male control and her own *karpu*, the Hindu woman controls her dangerous sacred powers and is able to use them for the benefit of her family (Wadley 1980:xii, S. Daniel

1980:67).¹ If a woman loses her virtue (*karpu*) she also loses her *cakti*, and if she becomes unchaste, then she destroys not only herself, but her entire family (Trawick 1980:25-26). The woman, then, is the power that holds the family, and hence the society, together.

The notions of *karpu* and *cakti* have been a theme in Tamil literature since the first centuries AD (Hart 1973), and, as I have discussed in Chapter Three, grew to prominence during the revival of Tamil literature that was part of the Dravidian renaissance (Pandian 1987).

The principle of *karpu* is embodied in Kannaki, the heroine of the Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram*. Kannaki was one of the famous Tamil historical figures honoured in a children's pageant produced by the *Onriyam* women's group. The biography of Kannaki was written and included in the pageant programme as follows:

When her husband Kovalan was beheaded after being wrongfully accused of stealing the Queen's anklet, Kannaki proved his innocence, charged the Pandyan King with his miscarriage of Justice, and reduced his capital, Madurai, to ashes with a terrible curse. Born in Chola Nadu, she fought for justice in the Pandya country and attained moksha in the Chera Kingdom. Gajabahu, a Sinhalese King from Ceylon, attended the deification ceremony in the Chera Kingdom and brought the cult to his own land. Kannaki is worshipped as the Goddess Pattini, especially in the coastal regions of Sri Lanka even today. She

¹Sheryl Daniel notes that the term *cakti* should not be confused with power in the sense of dominance. It is, rather, a psycho-physiological energy that may or may not be used by a person to assist him in controlling another person (1980:89).

has been given a special place in the magnificent Esala Perahera Festival celebrated annually in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in honour of Lord Buddha's sacred Tooth Relic (Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec 1989).

The story of Kannaki is considered by the Montreal Tamil women and men to be of great importance, since it contains important lessons about how women should be. Kannaki remained faithful to her husband, even though he had forsaken her to be with another woman; she was loyal to him, to the point of taking vengeance on the injustice done to him; and she was self-sacrificing, plucking off her breast and throwing it at the city, which was then consumed in flames. For that sacrifice, she ascended to the heavens, and continues to be worshipped today in Sri Lanka by both Sinhalese and Tamils (Pfaffenberger 1982:163).¹

The theme of chastity and its associated idioms of purity and impurity continues to be central to the identity of Tamils in Montreal. When a woman is in a state of great pollution, rituals of seclusion serve to restrict the woman's movement to ensure that others do not become polluted through contact with her; rituals of purification serve to counteract pollution through the administration of

¹Kannaki is worshipped by the Sinhalese as "Pattini" (Obeyesekera 1984). For Jaffna Tamils, the goddesses Kannaki and Mariyamman are indistinguishable (Pfaffenberger 1982:163).

substances which are either "heating" or "cooling."¹

Themes of female pollution are played out in rituals of seclusion and purification during menarche,² menstruation, and childbirth.

Talaivar and Murukan explained just how essential maintaining traditions around the preservation of female chastity is to the preservation of Tamil language and culture. They explained that in Canada one must try to change one's lifestyle (*vaḷakkam*) to be compatible with life in Canada, while preserving the core of Tamil culture (*kalāccāram*), which is epitomized in the notion of *karpu*. They introduced me to the term "*oruvanukku oruti*" (literally, one woman is to one man) as a way of illustrating the principle:

(Murukan): Now, what is culture? If you define culture, culture is a way of life. So, culture is *kalāccāram*. In Tamil, *kalāccāram*. What is *kalāccāram*? *Kalai* [art], *ācaraṇam* [custom or practice]. *Kalāccāram*. So that's a principle which is built up, back home [in Sri Lanka]. Now, we have come to this country, but the basic foundation shouldn't change. That's what we feel. But the way of life according to the demography, or according to the nature of the country, should

¹A concept of "pollution" or ritual impurity is common in many parts of the world and, as in South Asia, women who are "polluted" must be controlled and contained through rituals of seclusion and purification during menarche, menstruation, and childbirth (Douglas 1970).

²For a Tamil girl, the onset of menstruation with its transition into fertile marriageable womanhood is an important event. The *cāmarttiyakkaliyāṇam* (age-attaining ceremony) celebrates this, and also marks the beginnings of concern for the girl's chastity. In Montreal, the *cāmarttiyakkaliyāṇam* continues to be an important event.

change. For example, in our culture, we go to the temple with a bare body [that is, the men have a bare chest], because when you go with a bare body, you get sunlight. First you go to the well, to wash your legs, and then you go to the temple and pray to God. Because that is pureness. Okay, you cannot practise the same thing here.

(FB): Yes, that's for sure, you'd freeze.

(Murukan): Yes. But, the principles would remain the same. Now, [in Canada] you go to the temple with everything covered. So, actually, the praying to God and the respect, that remains the same. But the way of praying is different -- and that should change. Now, in our culture it is written when you go to the temple, you must do it that way, you must go and wash your legs and go with a bare body, you cannot have a hat on your head, that sort of thing. But when you come to Canada, okay I agree, you have to change that. You're not changing the culture, you are changing only the style. That's all that I mean. Now, there are so many things like that. Because it starts from the religion. For example you have to go to the temple very frequently -- in our own culture you have to go every day, and if you can't make it every day, every Friday you go. You may not be able to practice that, but it doesn't mean that you forgot your religion -- instead [of going to the temple every day] you have something at home, and then you are still practising your religion. The way of life changes, but not the foundation. That's the culture.

Now, another one is *oruvanukku oruti*. This is a basic principle. Here, in this country, there's no reason why you shouldn't follow that one. Because you meet various people, and when you mix with people and mix with their culture, you might try to forget or give up your culture. For instance, these people [in Canada] are dancing with everybody. Now in our culture the dancing's not allowed [i.e., men and women dancing as a couple]. When you try to mix with people and go to dances, then things start. And that is a hindrance to our culture. That's my train of thought. Because when you go to dances, you start with some liquor. I mean the ladies -- because our culture insists more on the ladies. Because when the ladies are straightened, all things can be easier.

So when the ladies are given the chance to go

out, they have a drink and these people run booze to them, and with two or three drinks, and especially drugs and everything, the people [e.g., Canadian men] can take them for a ride. There the breakdown comes. So, the way of life should change, but where it should change is the question. It should be changed, but not in every aspect. Certain things have to be changed, but not all. Things like this one [the women not going out to dances] shouldn't be changed. We have our own things, I don't think there's any necessity for a dance. With another man.

Now, why didn't our culture allow that [dancing]? Because when you dance with anybody else [i.e., a man other than one's husband], you don't know what he is going to do. And after all, you are human. You are tempted to do things. And when you are under the influence of liquor, then your mind might change. So, therefore, the way of life shouldn't change in that way, only in certain aspects it should be allowed to change. Not in all aspects. If we want to preserve our culture in this country it has to change like this.

(Talaivar): I agree in total. Because our culture definitely deteriorates. If you go to a party, and all our women are allowed to mix, intermix, then some people will get the wrong idea. When this girl goes to dance with him, he will think, well she's alright, she's like this, or that sort of attitude.

As well, I know that in Quebec there is a lot of fighting [i.e., in Tamil homes], maybe due to this freedom given here. I have heard, many lawyers with whom I work have told me, that there are a lot of Sri Lankan divorces being filed. So many lawyers have told me. The rate of Sri Lankan divorces being filed is much more than it was. So that means here, unlike in Sri Lanka where most of the women are confined to their homes and don't go to work, here of course to manage their living they are compelled to go to work. So by going to work they are also getting the freedom to mix in with people, which they have not done before in our country. That gives them an opportunity to lose their balance, or misbehave.

So those are the things that might contribute to the increase in divorce cases now. I have heard of a lot of divorce cases. I know of some families where the wife has dialled 911, called the police, and handed over the husband. I know, in fact I have been helping some of those couples

to read and write. So in that way I think our culture will be forgotten, in time to come. Some, you know, it is due, you know I don't blame anyone for it, but our ladies who had been confined to their homes in our country, when they came to this country and then were given all of this freedom, they really think that they can do whatever they want. Or they may get the idea 'I am working, why should I depend on my husband?' That sort of attitude might creep in. Or it might have crept in for them to file divorces. There are a number of murders that have taken place here in Montreal itself over that.

(FB): Really?

(Talaivar): Yes, where the husband has stabbed the wife because she has misbehaved and these sorts of things. So these are actually the outcome of them [the women] coming out of their homes and mixing freely, in other countries. But, anyway, that is the fault of the individual lady. Not all ladies are doing that. Temptation is a thing that has to be controlled. So if a lady cannot control herself, we have to blame only her. Not the others. But these are the types of things we notice. If we have to preserve our culture, everyone, whether it is a man or not -- some of our people I know, some of our women, are desperately driven into getting hold of someone for their satisfaction, because the men, you know, when they get any spare time they drink. They call friends and have a drink and do some things and pretty soon the wife, she may be also feeling, she may be feeling sex-starved and she may be compelled to get out. That may be a reason for the increase in this also. So, both ways even, I don't say the blame is entirely in the women. Even the males have to answer for such acts.

This conversation, then, illustrates the importance of the woman maintaining her *karpū*. Women must remain "straightened" and not lose their "balance," in order that "all things can be easier." In Canada, it is seen as difficult for a woman to maintain her *karpū* -- the model of *oruvāṅṅukku oruti*, or one woman to one man, is overshadowed

by the model of "serial polygyny" offered by Canadian society. Arumukam¹ explains this:

(Arumukam): The problem is, in these foreign countries, if you don't like the boyfriend, you leave him and get another boyfriend. If you don't like the husband you leave him and go and get another one. Actually, in Sri Lanka, it's one man to one wife [*oruvanukku oruti*]. So even if they fight, they live together until they die. Some people have some problems and they go beyond the limit also [in this context, meaning they become violent]. But they must stay together. Because the culture is like that, one man to one wife.

(FB): So you think that is already starting to change here?

(Arumukam): Oh, yes it is changing. There's also the problem that if a man doesn't like the lady, he leaves her and marries another one.

The notion that Tamil women must retain their *karpu* in Canada -- despite the temptations of Western society -- in order to safeguard Tamil culture, was also a common theme in local Tamil language publications. Consider this story about a young woman who was unfaithful, driving her husband to commit suicide. In the story, she is being chastised by a former boyfriend.²

"Can Traditions Change?"

Rangan meets his former love, Charumathy, at

¹Arumukam is an independent "social worker," specializing in hospital interpreting.

²As mentioned previously, just as the women are responsible for being chaste, it is the men's responsibility to ensure that they are doing so.

Steinberg's.¹ She had cut her hair and did not look like a Tamil girl any more. At her request, he gives his phone number. He thinks of Mahatma Gandhi's quotation: 'I welcome all winds of change and will permit them to blow over my life, but will not allow my culture to be blown away by any foreign breeze'. The grapevine had informed him that Charumathy's husband, Kankesan, had committed suicide barely two months earlier because Charumathy had started an affair with their boarder.

Charumathy phones him. Rangan reproaches her for having married another man at her father's wish, even though she knew Rangan was deeply in love with her. Charumathy tells him that her love for him had never died and outlines her unhappily married life:

Her husband believed in saving every cent to settle the mortgage. He took on a night job and took in a boarder. He never discussed finances with her. He also took her entire salary. She borrowed from friends and from the boarder. The latter began to make advances toward her. She told him that her husband neglected her, but she could not leave him because of debt. She finally succumbed to temptation, after warning her husband. Her husband then committed suicide.

'Am I guilty?' she asks Rangan. 'Yes,' he replies. 'If you had left him before misbehaving, it wouldn't have been wrong. But you betrayed his trust. Even if your husband hadn't trusted the boarder, he trusted you completely and you let him down. This goes against Tamil tradition.² To me, you seem a girl from a different country.³ Traditions should never change' (*Tamil Elil āṭi*, 1985 [summarized]).

¹Steinberg's was a large chain of supermarkets in Montreal.

²The word for tradition here is *marapu*, which means rule, law, established usage or order, that which is sanctioned by custom. It also means nature, property, characteristic, and good conduct or character.

³"*ennai poruttavarai inru nī oru vēru inattuppennarkavē paṭukirāy*" (You seem like a girl from a different country).

The negative influence of Canadian society on the ability of a woman to remain "chaste" is seen to be epitomized in the system of naming in Quebec. In Quebec, a woman keeps her own family name when she marries.¹ Since a woman retains her own name throughout her life, identity is no longer linked to the social ties that are created through marriage, and her children may use either their mother's or father's family name.

This leads to a great deal of anxiety for many Tamil men and women in Montreal, who worry that if a Tamil woman keeps her "father's" name after marriage, then she will no longer have the proper respect for her husband. The system is seen to reflect the sexual anarchy of Canadian society, which is the downfall of the "chaste" Tamil woman. This is expressed in the following conversation:

(Talaivar): Then we have another problem. That is about the names being changed. A Sri Lankan lady who marries is unable to use her husband's name. Our tradition, our custom, is once they are married, they use the husband's name. They forget about the father's name. There [in Sri Lanka] they have one is to one [*oruvanukku oruti*]: One husband, one wife. So she can always use the husband's name, right through. 'Till her death she is going to be one with him. So that is why, once they have been married, they are Mrs. so and so. But in the Canadian way, it's different.

(FB): It's only in Quebec, though, that a woman has to keep her maiden name on forms. In

¹This policy, which came into effect in 1981, only exists in the province of Quebec -- in the rest of the country, the policy continues to be that a married woman uses her husband's family name.

Manitoba, in the rest of Canada, for the government forms and so on, a woman can put her husband's name on official forms.

(Talaivar): Are you sure?

(FB): Yes, but in Quebec they started this in the mid-1970s or something. There's a different legal system here.¹

(Talaivar): But the child is using the grandfather's name! You see? Now you see something like my grandson, when my son-in-law went to register him, and they said, 'Your surname is Sivarajah, so you must use Sivarajah.' So actually, it's Pillai Sivarajah. It's the grandfather's name. The father's name is Ganesha. But that name doesn't come in.²

(FB): And they wouldn't allow you to put whatever?

(Talaivar): No, they didn't. What my son-in-law did is, he said okay, my son's name is Pillai Ganesha. They had to lie [he laughs]. That way, they managed to get his name in. But the system is entirely different from that. I didn't know that was only in Quebec, I didn't know that.

(FB): Yes, my sister for instance, in Manitoba, she's married. She no longer has our father's name now, she doesn't have Brunger, she has her husband's last name.

(Talaivar): That's the correct procedure! So I don't like it here -- a lady when she gets married cannot use the husband's name.

¹I found out later that the policy had come into effect on April 26, 1981.

²Here, he is actually introducing a second problem. In the traditional Hindu system of naming, one is given a name at birth which is combined with one's father's name, with the father's name placed before one's given name. This causes a great deal of confusion both for Tamils and for Canadian officials in Canada, since the term "family name" or "surname" on official forms is usually taken to mean the father's name, which in the Hindu naming system is placed before, not after, the given name -- leaving the correct order in which names should appear on official forms open to debate.

(Murukan): Because it has a psychological effect. The name has a psychological effect. Now, when the father's name comes first everywhere, that has a psychological effect. When the wife is writing the husband's name, she always has respect. She signs as her husband's name, so that respect starts. That is why it's being practised. In fact, I know that when some people came here as refugees and I was supposed to fill out some forms, I changed it [i.e., on forms for women, used the husbands's name as her last name]. Because they were thinking 'This is my father's name -- this is not correct.' And they don't like to be called by their father's name. They like to be called, for example Mrs. Murukan. They don't want to be called Mrs. Tambirajah.

(Talaivar): I came to this conclusion, which may be right or wrong, I don't know. Now, you see, according to our culture, it is *oruvanukku oruti*, one lady remains with one man, right through her life. In Canada, in Quebec or anywhere, they marry several times. So every time you say Mrs. A, Mrs. B, when she changes the husband, Mrs. C., like that you know. So it's easier if they have one name, their father's name [all of us laugh]. That's my inference. Because some of them may marry ten times, and they would become Mrs. A, Mrs. B, and so on.

The Quebec system of naming, then, is seen as a symbol of the "serial polygyny" which typifies Canadian society. The implications of the system of naming in terms of the daily lives of the Tamils is that the relationship of containment which is implied when a woman takes on her husband's name is no longer there. Trawick explains this relationship of containment between man and woman by comparing it to the relationship between body and soul. The body (ஆ) is male, and the self (*uyir*) is female; the body protects and contains the soul as a husband protects and contains his wife (Trawick [Egnor] 1978:174-5). Kenneth

David (1973) explains the husband-wife bond in terms of the concept of *kuṇam*. In the classification of kinship in Jaffna, kinsmen (defined as those who sit and eat together) are those who share natural substance (*kuṇam*) and a unique level of purity. At marriage, a woman's bodily substance is transubstantiated, and she begins sharing bodily substance with her husband's family, rather than with her natal family (David 1973:530; see also Pfaffenberger 1984:155).

A Tamil woman in Quebec who does not use her husband's name is denying this relationship of containment. By not using her husband's name, she is no longer united with him, in the sense of *oruvanukku oruti*; she is not being the Kannaki-like wife that she should be. Rajah, of *Oḷi*, summed up the dangers inherent in the Quebec naming system by saying: "In fact we can not allow that to continue, because we will lose our identity."

In the next chapter I will explore the implications of this perceived difficulty of maintaining a woman's *karpu* in the Canadian context for the preservation of Tamil culture. I will argue that ideological knowledge about authenticated ("pure") Tamil culture is being constructed differently by the culture keepers on the two sides of the community divide.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *AKAM/PURAM*

In this chapter, I examine the everyday meanings behind the two different ideologies of *kalāccāram* within the Montreal community. I argue that Tamil culture keepers on the "cultural" side of the community divide are oriented toward the Tamil concept of *akam*, meaning the interior, love, and activities that happen within the home and family. These people are concerned that the lifestyle in Canada makes it difficult for a woman to maintain her own purity and the purity of Tamil culture, and thus every effort must be made to ensure that she does. In their construction of cultural identity, they draw upon the symbol of *karpū*, or the chaste Tamil woman who is confined and protected within the home.

Those concerned with safeguarding Tamil language and culture on the "political" side of the divide are oriented toward the concept of *puṛam*, meaning the exterior, war, and activities that happen outside of the home and family. They are concerned that the Canadian lifestyle is necessarily incompatible with Tamil culture, and that every effort must

be made to ensure the creation of a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka in order that the Tamil language and culture may survive. They draw upon the Tamil nationalist symbol of *Tamiḷ Tāy* or "Mother Tamil" (meaning Eelam) who is protected from the encroaching Sinhalese.

8.1 "Akam".

"Speaking the Truth"

Even if the people around you speak English, how can one Tamil desire to speak to another Tamil in a language other than Tamil? Why couldn't our cultured elders [*paṇṇaṭṭa periyavarkaḷ*] have thought of this earlier? Even if written Tamil is not taught at home, they could teach the children to speak the language. Can't they follow their cultural traditions to some extent? The children kiss their darlings in front of their parents. If you intimidate them for doing so, they'll dial 911¹ -- police. Poor 'daddy' and 'mummy' [orig. in English]. Even a lion in a circus roars in its own language when lashed. The parrot says 'keekee' in its own language, even if it is taught human speech. A man can learn all the languages and follow any culture (*kalāccāram*), but he must never forget his own language and culture. If he does, he is a fool (*Tamiḷ Eliḷ tai*, 1990 [excerpt]).

For Tamils safeguarding the Tamil language and culture who are oriented to the principle of "akam," "pure" Tamil language continues to be conceptualized as "Mother Tamil" (*tamiḷ tāy*), and the responsibility for ensuring that "pure" Tamil language and culture are preserved in Canada is seen

¹Mention of a child or a wife (usually the wife) dialling "911" is often used to describe how the culture is disintegrating, since it represents a lack of respect for the men or elders.

to be inextricably linked with the ability of women to maintain not only their own purity (*karpu*), but also the purity of the Tamil language and culture, despite the temptations of Canadian society.¹

It is considered to be the responsibility of Tamil women to set an example for Tamil children, and her duty to pass on Tamil language and culture to them. If the woman fails in her duty, then the traditions will be lost. This is expressed in the following three articles from local Tamil publications (all written by men). The first is a message of warning to Tamil women, and a veiled threat that the new year should bring changes to how their children are being raised, or the Tamil culture will not survive:²

"The Responsibility Lies with the Mothers"

My request to my brothers and sisters who have sought refuge from the holocaust in Sri Lanka, following the demand for Tamil Eelam: teach your children Tamil language and Tamil culture. 'The flute is sweet; the harp is sweet,' so say those who haven't heard the lisping speech of their children [which is much sweeter]. Is there anyone on earth who hasn't rejoiced at hearing the lisping speech of their children? So many of those children who have gone abroad have no elders at home other than their parents. So it is the mother's responsibility to care for her children. It's the mother's main duty to encourage them and train them to speak correctly and fluently, and to

¹The women, then, fulfil a role common to many Third and Fourth World women as bearers of the appearance of tradition and as the embodiment of the Nation (Taussig 1993:177).

²The new year is seen as a time to "wipe the slate clean" and resolve to do those things which have been neglected.

teach them in general.

Some of the Tamils who have come abroad think that their main job is to earn money and they do not think of their children's future. When the child is two or three months old they leave them in daycare centres and rush off to work. In the end the money they make is wasted. The children learn French and English at an early age and learn to do as they please. In the end it is disco during leisure time, restaurants for food, girlfriends and boyfriends, and misery. Where is the hard-earned money now? Think on this, parents. Life doesn't mean money alone.

It is only when mothers devote time and attention to their children that the latter turn out to be good children. Children are not born wise or learned. It's the upbringing that makes them so. When children begin to speak, parents should teach them little songs and tales in Tamil and train them to speak well. This has been our custom for ages and is not peculiar to the Tamils alone. All linguistic groups do it. At ages three to four we can gauge a child's intelligence by the questions he or she asks. They are eager to learn at this age. They should be shown the beauties of nature, beneficial sights, by hanging suitable pictures in their bedrooms. They may be trained to admire and draw multi-coloured pictures.

Those who live abroad must take their children to Tamil cultural festivals. It is the only place where they can learn about the culture of the Tamils. Many parents fear that if their children are taught Tamil, they will neglect the study of French and English. So they speak to their children in English, at home. Some are even ashamed to teach their children Tamil. These are wrong opinions. Some children pick up several languages, all at the same time. But the opportunities for speaking Tamil abroad are very few. So mothers must teach them at home.

A million Tamils live on earth, but there is no one country where they can all live. The race is being destroyed gradually because they are ashamed to speak Tamil. Parents should encourage their children to read at home. Just as their studies improve by daily homework, so their Tamil will improve if the mothers talk to them daily. How many of our people have had their education in the Tamil medium? Many of them are great scholars who hold high posts in foreign countries.

Think about and understand the richness of

Tamil. The modern Tamil woman visualized by Bharati was young in thought. Along with love, soft speech, pleasant dreams, one must mingle with children and render selfless service. Receive friends and relations with a smiling face. The new year will bring a new radiance in your lives (Tamil Elil cittirai, 1989).

The story below also chastises those women who have failed in their duty to teach their children Tamil -- the woman in this story ("Sarada") is shamed into changing her attitude:

"The Curtain is Drawn"

Ever since I arrived in Canada, I've been wanting to visit Uncle Sundaralingam who has been here for 25 years. I wrote to his university in Ontario, where he is a professor. He was the first to enter the university from our school. He was outstanding in math and could paint and appreciate literature and music. He could even sing -- an allrounder! I wonder what he's like now? Memories of childhood... He coached my brothers and me in math. He loved Tamil literature and spent his evenings by the temple tank enjoying the beauties of nature and reading Bharathiyai's poems. He wrote poetry himself.

The phone rang. 'I'm Dr. Sundaralingam. May I speak to Sarada?' I was overjoyed. 'I was thinking of you right now, Uncle. You'll live to be a hundred!.' 'Is that so, short woman. When did you arrive here?' He used to call me that in childhood. We chatted for half an hour. He promised to come and see us here in Montreal.

'You seem very happy, Sarada,' remarked my husband. The children rushed to hug me on their return from school. 'Uncle Sundaralingam called. He's coming to see us next week,' I announced joyfully. 'You wouldn't look so happy even if you had won a lottery,' joked my husband.

Finally Uncle Sundaralingam arrived on the due date. He looked about fifty years of age, wearing glasses, alert-looking, half-bald and grey. Of the two of us, he was more surprised at my appearance. 'Short woman, is it you? You are like an old woman,' he teased.

I introduced my family. He was jovial. He

inquired about our school and about how we'd come to Canada. I related the manner of our leaving the civil war in Eelam. He listened sorrowfully. In the end, when I described our personal suffering, he wept. 'Uncle, having been born Tamils, we suffered so much. I wouldn't wish it even on my enemy. What a lot we've had to bear, after starting this war to enable the Tamils to live with self-respect. Why even here, we have processions and demonstrations. Old immigrants like you have no sympathy for the refugees. Why? Have you lost all feeling for the Tamils?' I was bold enough to ask the question.

'Sarada, people like me came here for employment. We left Eelam before the troubles began. We who came to better ourselves economically are leading lives which will bring honour and respect to the Sri Lankan Tamils. So many of the Tamil refugees, after undergoing much hardships, are involved in nefarious activities which could dishonour the Tamils in the countries which have given them refuge. Why? Can you answer this?' I felt the stab. 'Forgive me, Sarada, I'm not accusing everybody. But because of the activities of a few, the entire Tamil community here has to hang its head in shame. Did you know that?' he asked.

I bent my head in shame. As for processions and demonstrations, I have heard that the Tamils here flock to the demonstrations demanding their acceptance as refugees, not to those held for the good life for the people of Eelam. Silence reigned.

Wishing to change the subject, he called the children and spoke to them in Tamil. They stared. In an embarrassed tone, I explained, 'Uncle, we've put them in French immersion. At home, we speak English. The children don't know Tamil. He burst out laughing. 'Saru, we are Tamils. By speaking English at home, you are changing their very faces. What will you lose by speaking Tamil?'

'No, Uncle, it would be difficult for the children.'

'Did they complain?' he asked teasingly. I remained silent. 'Look here, Sarada, when the children go out they will pick up English and French. They can't learn Tamil in that way. You have to teach them that at home and preserve your spiritual ties with the children. Or else everything will become artificial and you will become orphans later. He chatted for a little while more and left.

'Mummy,' the children approached me. 'Don't say "Mummy" in future. Call me "Ammā,"' I said, hugging the children. My husband assented by look (*Pārvai āṭi*, 1988).

A rather different point of view is illustrated in the following article: rather than chastising the women for having failed in their duties, this author praises Tamil women for continuing to set an example for their children despite changing circumstances in Canada.¹

"Sri Lankan Women in Canada"

I know of many women who have come to Canada alone and then later sponsored their husbands and families. Some have become quite independent and bold, and fight for their rights and privileges. They do not hesitate to call the police or walk into social service centres when they are abused or assaulted by their husband. Tamil women-doctors are considered a great blessing to the community, as they [Tamil community members] can express their medical needs in their mother tongue. Tamil women are good wives and mothers; they are loving and caring. They find great pleasure in entertaining friends and relatives. They are full of love that makes the world go round. They do their best to make their home a sweet home. There are those who think that Tamil men are hard-working, but I say the Tamil women are much more so. Though they are advancing in many respects, they do not forget their culture. Most of them dress gracefully, celebrate their festivals, observe all their traditions, and are examples to their children. Let us wish them well (*Tamil Elil paṅkuṇi*, 1990 [orig. in English]).

¹It is interesting that this article was written in English. It is rare to see articles in these Tamil publications in English or French: those that are, are usually written in an effort to demonstrate to "Canadians" and to the Tamil community in general that the Tamils are integrating effectively. (For example, one article is entitled "Je suis Tamoule, Je suis Québécoise").

Among the culture keepers of the community there is a fear that Tamil children are being absorbed into the Canadian way of life, have already lost the Tamil language, and are rapidly losing their Tamil culture. One of the greatest concerns is that some of the children speaking Tamil in the dramas that are part of the *kalai vilā* transliterate their lines into French phonemes in order to memorize the part. The loss of language is a symbol for the downfall of all of the "good" or "pure" principles of Tamil culture, especially chastity. For the children, especially the teenagers, a desire to integrate into Quebec society is of course far stronger than the desire to learn the Tamil language. The community culture keepers recognize this, and are struggling with ways to "gently force" the children to learn Tamil through providing incentives.

One teen-age girl wrote an article in French, which was published in *Tamil Elil*, in which she expresses great pride at being both Tamil and Québécoise.

"I'm Tamil, I'm Québécoise"

The French language pleases me a lot, and I find it to be one of the most beautiful languages in the world. I like Quebec a lot, and will always be indebted to Quebecers for their kindness and helping open arms, and now for their acceptance as I go through the process of integration. In the future, once my education is complete, I would like to become a French teacher, in order to teach others this beautiful language which I have learned. I'm proud to be Tamil! I'm proud to be Québécoise! (*Tamil Elil kārttikai*, 1989 [orig. in French]).

Mr. Rajah of *Oli* is concerned about the loss of Tamil language among the children and wishes to expand the activities of the organization in order to prevent further deterioration:

(Rajah): Now we are trying to have a Tamil language class. You know a lot of our children don't know Tamil now. They speak English or French. Because when they go to school they speak English and French. Whether or not the mother and father understand French, they speak French. So in time to come they might forget our language. And if they forget our language, they might forget our culture too. So in fact we are trying to get this school, at least we can organize a school, with students, a recognized, registered Tamil school. If we have a school it is much better for our people. Otherwise in time to come they won't be holding anything [any classes]. In Sri Lanka, we studied English, but we still knew about our culture. But the new generation, they don't know, they don't have the opportunity to know about their country or about their culture. Because even the parents don't have time to tell them. Only the temple is there. That also they might forget, in time to come. And the other thing is our religion must be taught. That is why we want a separate school. Our religion should be taught.

Talaivar expressed the same fear that children will not learn Tamil language, and will therefore also lose their culture.

(FB): So, what do you think is the best thing to happen for the future of the new generation of Tamils in Montreal?

(Talaivar): I find that there are only one or two small services that are rendered to the Tamil children, and it's not enough. You know, some of the Tamils, of course, they think they can forget their culture and just be like a Canadian in the new location. If the person wants to be like that, fine. But if the person is really interested in building up the Tamil culture, the Tamil language, then small children who are born

in Canada will completely forget. There will be a breakdown of the language; even to the religious Hindus, it will happen.

The idea of the Saiva Mission or the other associations is to encourage those who are interested in building up their culture, their language, by conducting classes, evening classes or weekend classes. So for the small children who are born and bred here who are doing French and English, they could take advantage of this situation and study their 'mother tongue,' as they call it.

That's what my wish is, that our children, those born in Canada, they must also be given the opportunity to not only mix with the Canadians and learn the Canadian way of life, they should also, the parents must advise their children to know something about their local customs, their manners, their language, their religion, and all that. Irrespective of whether they go to Sri Lanka or not, if they wish to remain in Canada right through, no one has any objection to it, but to know their own mother tongue, their mother culture, is very good. And for that we should offer some chance. I know so many people who used to ask me, 'Uncle, can't you find a place for my children to study the Tamil language?' Some of them, they don't know the alphabet even.

Murukan offered a similar perspective:

(Murukan): What I think is that our culture is based upon the language. Because there is a strong bond between the culture and the language. Our culture is based upon the language. So, unless attention is given to the language, the culture can't build up. For example, as you have read in so many books, the Rāmāyaṇam, the Tirukkural, and Cilappatikāram, whatever, those books are insisting on the culture. Now, as you know, our culture is based on one husband and one wife, and those are the foundations. One to one [oruvanukku oruti]. And the second is to respect the elders. Now, we respect three people next to God. First is God -- it can be any God. And the second thing is the Guru. And then the parents, the elderly people. So, those foundations are insisted upon in all the books. Now, in our culture, everything is built upon that. And since these are insisted on in the books [i.e., the Tamil epics and other literary works], if the Tamil child cannot read them, he doesn't know what

the culture is. Therefore it will be forgotten. So whatever it is, unless you insist on the language, in this country, the culture will be forgotten.

And how can we insist on the language in this country? That's the next question. Okay, there are so many organizations, and all of these can teach the children Tamil, but are those viable solutions? I would say no. Because we have to look at the perspective of a child. Now, I have my children. What is going to happen in the next generation? After some time, my son will come and ask me, 'Why should I study Tamil?' The reason why he will ask that, is that it's of no benefit to him. So there should be an incentive for him to learn Tamil. In Ontario this is felt. Some of the Tamils have met with the Education Department, and they have recognized Tamil as a heritage language. By the Education Department. And it will give a credit to the children when they study Tamil.¹ So that's a big step forward. And that shows the multiculturalism of Canada.

In cases where Tamil children are maintaining some aspects of Tamil culture, by going to South Indian films or listening to Tamil music, many of the culture keepers feel that there is a problem with the type of Tamil culture which is being maintained in Canada. It is seen as "pop" culture, not "pure" culture, as this joke illustrates:

"Don't Laugh"

The goddess Sarasvati,² in Canada, asks a boy: 'What is a "copy" and what is a "book"?' The boy answers: 'A "copy" is a video cassette and a "book" is a passport.' The goddess vanishes (*Tamil Elil aṭi*, 1985).

¹I later read that the Ontario government had abandoned the credit course in Tamil, which had been launched by the North York Board of Education, because only two students had turned up.

²The goddess Sarasvati is often used to represent "Mother Tamil."

In this joke, reference is made to the extensive use of videos in the Tamil community in Montreal. Some of the community culture keepers are worried that the only Tamil culture that the children are being exposed to in Canada comes from videos of Tamil films ("pop" culture). Others have expressed concern that the extensive videotaping of events such as weddings, being done in order to send a copy to relatives in Sri Lanka, is causing those events to be "performed" for the camera, rather than being done for their own ends. Others are concerned that by focusing too much on evening programmes which bring in Indian film stars (often organized by the World Tamil Movement and extremely popular in the community), the "pop" culture will be preserved in Canada, and the "pure" (i.e., "authenticated") culture will be lost. Natarajah, with his drama-oriented Canada Tamil Cultural Association, is actively trying to counteract this trend by encouraging local artists to focus on dramatic productions which re-enact the Tamil epics and reflect traditional Tamil values such as chastity. He, like many of the other culture keepers oriented toward the *akam* aspect of preserving Tamil culture, is very worried that in Montreal the use of the Tamil language is declining, the basic principles of Tamil culture (such as *karpu*) are disappearing, and that the Tamil nature (*kuṇam*) is changing.

8.2 "Puram."

"When Will We Get that Well-being?"¹

Astride the horse of the mind
 We cross the street of the sky
 Daily, towards our Eelam
 We fly in a second.

We live like corpses here, day to day
 We think/count money alone
 We change the Tamil nature, [*kuṇam*]
 And abuse our race [*iṇam*].²

We came to Canada hoping
 To live like great men.
 Who could ever know how we suffer
 In the intense cold here.

At the end of the tyrant's rule
 In the shade of the tall, beautiful tree
 We inhale the *koṇṭal* breeze
 Can that pleasure be found here?

We've seen a thousand countries
 Lived in all of them
 But we have not felt the pleasure
 Given by our mother land³
 (Tamil Elil vaikāci, 1985).

The image of the "motherland" is one of the most powerful unifying symbols for displaced peoples and for those in nationalist movements (e.g., Gupta and Ferguson 1992:11, Handler 1988:106). Gupta and Ferguson point to the irony of this, since "as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, ideas of culturally and

¹*Cukam* means health or welfare, but can also mean happiness, comfort, and that which is good and beneficial.

²*Iṇam* means race, clan, or any kind of class or group division.

³*Anṇaiyiṇ pūmi* -- literally, "mother's earth."

ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient" (1992:10).

Tamil culture keepers oriented toward the principle of *puṛam* believe that it is only in an independent homeland in Sri Lanka that the Tamil culture can survive. They are actively involved in the political events unfolding in Sri Lanka, and are committed to supporting those who remained in Sri Lanka to fight for an independent Tamil state. They argue that the "true" Tamils will work for the cause in Eelam, because it is the only hope for preserving Tamil culture.

Just as culture keepers oriented toward the principle of *akam* chastise women for failing in their duties as good wives and mothers, those oriented toward the principle of *puṛam* chastise men for being too involved in making money in Canada, and not concerned enough with the cause in Sri Lanka. This is illustrated in the following story about two brothers in Canada. The elder brother is content to simply work in Canada, but the younger brother convinces him that if he truly wants to preserve the Tamil language and culture, he will turn instead to helping the militant groups in Sri Lanka.

"Elder brother is in Canada"

Sivaranjan: Hello brother Chinnaija! How is life?
I haven't seen you for seven or eight months.
Where are you working?

Chinnaija: Alas, little brother, why talk about it. Six of us to build a house, is it easy?

S: The eldest Bala, and the other four -- are they all at home?

C: All are working, little brother. We are contributing to two *cīṭṭus*¹ per head. What's going to be left over?

S: Did any of your boys return home to join a movement?²

C: We have shit in our heads. I lied and brought back the boy who went. My house -- I'm afraid someone is going to take it. I appointed someone to take care of that. Still, I'm afraid.³

S: Do any of the boys in movements come with notices? If they come, give them five or ten [dollars] and win them over.⁴

C: Alas, if you let them in once, they will come often and trouble us. That's why I keep the door locked and keep them at bay.⁵

S: They [the militant groups] are at loggerheads. What do you think of that, elder brother?

C: I came as a refugee; my family also is here. They too [the militants] can come here and lead a

¹A lottery system of bartering for pooled money.

²"Movement" refers to one of the various groups fighting for Tamil rights in Sri Lanka.

³In other words, one of his sons had gone back to Sri Lanka to join a movement, but the father went and brought him back out of fear for his life, and also appointed someone to look after the family home in Sri Lanka, in case it was destroyed in the violence.

⁴The LTTE (and other groups when they were in existence in Montreal) go door to door asking for financial donations to help the "boys" fighting in Sri Lanka.

⁵There is fear of getting involved with one group or other in Montreal, because family and friends both in Montreal and also possibly in Sri Lanka may then be in danger -- there is violence between the rebel groups.

good life. Why are they fighting there?

S: No, elder brother. We need a country of our own. That's why they are fighting, the poor fellows.

C: I too lived in our country for fifty years. I fell at the feet of the UNP [United National Party] for employment and coupon rice [subsidized rice]. The Sinhala government has done this to us. The youths came with their fierce attacks and reduced everything to misery.

S: What are you saying? What is there in that country that we could call ours? Did we have freedom to live as human beings? We were underlings, grovelling at their feet. Is that life? When you die, which will be your children's country? You teach them English as their mother tongue. Even in the applications forms, if they ask what is your mother tongue, what is your mother country, will Canada become your native land? Won't your relatives laugh?

C: I want to advise you, little brother. Listen, you can do two jobs. Save a little and lead the life of a good and great person. Let them [the Tamils in Sri Lanka] die or be destroyed. Don't worry about them. Collect what you can, while you can, little brother.

S: Granted. I'm young. But the blood in my veins is mother Tamil's blood of love. We are born today and could die tomorrow. Yet I'll try to safeguard mother Tamil's honour to the best of my ability. That is every Tamil's ambition.

C: I have come to my senses only now, little brother. I'm not of any use to my country [as he is, in Canada]. What is the use of living and dying. I've been a fool. After listening to your sound advice, I shall set forth to do battle, tomorrow (Tamil Elil Pañkuni, 1991).

Here, "doing battle" does not necessarily mean going back to Sri Lanka -- the people of the "political side" are equally concerned that those who came to Canada also work for the cause in Sri Lanka, by raising funds, lobbying the Canadian government for sanctions against the Sri Lankan government, telling interested Canadians about the horrors

of the civil war, and so on. They are concerned that not enough people in Canada are fighting for Eelam, and that unless the community in Montreal unites to fight for Eelam, all chances of a homeland will be lost. Father Joseph explains this:

(Joseph): There seems to be a frustration coming out of what is happening in Sri Lanka, because they always hope, the people live in the hope that somehow or other the Tigers at the end will conquer. But the signs are that they are being conquered. So that's what I feel is important, and I think there are quite a number of people in the Tamil community like that. I think this issue of having a land of their own is built into the psyche, you know, and you cannot take it away.

We, the Tamils, we have failed miserably in realizing two things, you know, culturally. First, it is common sense to know that the Sinhalese people must also accept this situation [of Tamil rights to a homeland]; the other one is that the Tamils living in Madras must say 'yes it's time for that [sovereignty] and we are with you.' These two things we avoided, we bungled at everything, from the beginning. So you know that means this psyche is very lonely now. And the loneliness is crushing them. On a, what do you call that, collective consciousness. It's very depressing. So they want to either forget about it, or they want to have that false hope that someday these boys will do it. That these twelve-year-olds and fourteen-year-olds¹ will do it.

Tamils who structure their cultural identity around images of the "motherland" feel that they have a moral responsibility to safeguard their identity by protecting Mother Tamil in Eelam. The connection that Tamils feel with their homeland is not merely political, nor is it only a

¹Many believe that most of the men and teenagers who were involved in the militant groups have fled the country, and those left fighting are the young boys (and girls).

psychological longing for the homeland -- the connection is one which could be described as "politico-psychophysiological."

This relationship between a person and his or her (home)land can be clarified again by turning to the popular Tamil conceptualization of the body. *Kuṇam* substances are exchanged in the relationships between people and between a person and the foods which he or she consumes, and between a person and his or her physical environment. This mixing of soil substance and bodily substance is more than just the mingling of bodily wastes, food, and water leavings -- Daniel points out that for the mingling of person and *Ūr* to take place, there need be no ingestion of food or water (1984:84-5). The most important variable in the *Ūr*-person compatibility is the type of *kuṇam* (quality) substance of both the *Ūr* and the person. The *Ūr* has an effect on its inhabitants, just as the planets have an effect on humans and deities have an effect on their devotees. When a person thinks of travelling to a new *Ūr*, whether a new village or a new country, his first thought is to try to discover if one of his people has successfully settled there -- not because of the need to have friends or family there, but because if the new *Ūr* is compatible with one of one's own kind, there is a good chance that it will also be compatible with oneself (Daniel 1984:81).

People's bodies, then, are at one with the soil on

which they live, and with substances which flow among persons and within a person. The following poem, written by a Montreal Tamil refugee "missing" Sri Lanka illustrates this politico-psycho-physiological connection with the homeland.

"Earth From Our Yard that I Want"¹

We rose in the morning, forgetting coffee
Cycled down the road to Mathagal beach
To watch them skin the fish brought in
While it was still warm.
We wondered and rejoiced on that
Earth from our yard that I want.

My mother watched me eat *piṭṭu*²
Made of sifted, roasted flour
With *campāl*³ and prawn gravy
And roasted dried fish, on that
Earth from our yard that I want.

When my grandfather, mustache waxed with ghee
Twirled it and slipped as he came down the steps
I rushed to his aid 'My grandson bore my weight,
heavy as I am,' he praised me, in narrating the tale
To the people of our town, standing on the
Earth from our yard that I want.

When I pestered my grandmother, time and again
To play *pāṇṭi*⁴ she knocked down tamarind pods
Poked out the seeds
Washed and dried them for use
On the heavy, hard satinwood board, made on that
Earth from our yard that I want.

Little sister on a teakwood bench

¹The term *vēṇṭum* implies both want and need.

²*Piṭṭu* is a type of confectionary made from a compressed and steamed mixture of rice flour and grated coconut.

³*Campāl* is a type of savory dish.

⁴*Pāṇṭi* is a game played with a tablet of fourteen pits filled with dried seeds.

Shed tears when I related the story of
 The mighty Karnan¹ and his fall
 Tears that rested a moment on her cheek
 To vanish on her lip, on that
 Earth from our yard that I want.

There is money in this land² and a prosperous life
 We have kith and kin and family too.
 The guts of my mind refuse to digest the past.
 To rear my descendants on that
 Soil I dream of, I need that
 Earth from our yard that I want.

Tales of victory may spread in all directions
 Family history lies in the soil of our yard
 When my soul departs in detachment to that other world
 It's the earth from our yard that should be scattered
 On my corpse -- for which they'll need that
 Earth from our yard that I want
 (Nāyakan āvaṇi, 1989).

The Canadian lifestyle is equated with tremendous financial difficulties. The need for both men and women to work double workdays is partly due to the huge costs incurred in coming to Canada,³ the breakdown of the *cīṭṭu* system,⁴ and the inflation of dowry prices in Canada,⁵ but

¹Karnan, or Kannan, is one of the characters in the epic Mahābhārata.

²"This land" refers to Canada.

³Many of the Tamil refugees arrive in Montreal already thousands of dollars in debt, because huge sums of money were borrowed to finance the escape from Sri Lanka. On average, \$12,000 (Canadian) is paid to "travel agents" -- people who provide false documents and transportation out of Sri Lanka.

⁴The *cīṭṭu* is a lottery system of bartering for pooled money, common in Sri Lanka and in South India. The *cīṭṭu* bears some resemblance to the "pyramid" money schemes of North America, in that if one person pulls out, the others lose their money. A standard size of a *cīṭṭu* in Montreal is twenty members, with a total of \$10,000 invested.

is also attributed to the effort to fit into "Canadian culture." Father Joseph explains this:

(Joseph): The thing here is the pressure of making money to bring some of the relatives here, and people have aligned themselves with the major culture, so everyone has to have expensive things, you know, a high-priced car. All of these things are imitating the culture [of Canadians]. We are picking it up [Canadian culture]. You know, the kind of, the wealthy life. I don't believe that some of our Tamil men need to have cars. There's no need at all. They're right there, living in Côte-des-Neiges [i.e., centrally located], what need is there of a car? All of the metros [subways] and buses are very easy. So, you know, this has become a symbol for them to write to Sri Lanka about, for them [people in Sri Lanka] to know that their son has a car, or so someone can give up their daughter [because the family is sufficiently wealthy to attract a wealthy husband for their daughter]. I know of some of the Tamils, this is also another point, many Tamils are now jobless in Toronto. Some of them bought houses, you know, with their brothers and sisters they formed groups and bought houses, and now they are folding. They can't survive. Many of them were doing sixteen hours, twelve hours, ten hours of work, in order to pay the bank, and now they can't do that.

The socioeconomic difficulties that exist in Canada are said not only to cause psycho-social problems in the Tamil community, but also problems (*tōṣam*) in one's physical, spiritual, and moral make-up (*kuṇam*). The Canadian lifestyle is not regarded as isolated from other aspects of the Canadian "environment." The Canadian weather, morality, spirituality, and so on, are regarded as inter-connected and

⁵The dowry often takes the form of gifts as well as cash. The gifts are usually a car, or the down-payment on a house, or some other expensive item, and thus the cost of the dowry may amount to thousands of dollars.

are seen to be incompatible with Tamil culture. The following poem, which describes Canada as "one long fridge," illustrates this fusion of elements of nature, morality, and socio-economic difficulties:

"*The Icebox*"

As a whole, this country is one long fridge.
In the west, snow collects in a mountain of ice.
With a running nose, we drag in our breath and cover up -
Within that we are all half-dead.

Tubers, spinach, and onions¹ live on the bottom shelf,
Lowly people, for three months.
For three months, shorts that reveal legs,
Full dress in November;
Because of the freezing cold, blankets, and thermal wear.
When the season changes and the sun blazes,
Many don't wear shirts.

Who will remain in Canada if one has to walk?
Even the car stops on the highway in winter -
Those who boast of new cars have been seen
Begging for a push.
Adolescents smoke to their hearts' content,
The young may be seen kissing here and there -
Our folks, on seeing this, peep at them.
Are the pure Tamils going to delay
When they see a tasty tidbit?

Even when wrapped in furs, one is half dead, exhausted.
We shiver and dislike the country.
Like dead chickens, we pure Tamils are confined.
Insanely one thinks of prospering in a foreign land.
All told, this land is an honour to the capitalist,
Yet our fellows put their shoulders to the wheel and attempt
to do well (*Nāyakan aippaci*, 1989).

In much of the prose and poetry written about life in Montreal, the word *iyantiram* (machine) occurs -- "We work with machines, like machines" is how the experience of life

¹."Onions" is used in this context in a derogatory way to describe people of "low" social standing.

in Montreal is described in the poem below. The machine metaphor is a particularly cogent one, because it contrasts sharply with the image of the "fluid body" described by Daniel (1984).

"To Stay or to Go?"

'The mother who bore you and the land of your birth are better than heaven.' Even if we didn't understand this fully then, we are able to do so now, aren't we? The aged mother totters, suffers because of illness and there is no one to care for her. We who should be at her side comforting her and supporting her in our arms, have abandoned her -- she who bore us, the arms that fed, pampered, and lulled us to sleep. We have come to live in a different world. Is this right or just? We have abandoned our mothers.

Now let's turn to our mother country. We were made slaves and refugees in our own land. When our brethren rose to fight against this, we fled the land like cowards. Those who were really wanted by the government are still at home. We grabbed the opportunity to get out. We dreamed of America, Canada, and Europe, fascinated by the glamour of foreign countries. We dreamed of a comfortable existence.

What do we see here today? We have forgotten our traditional culture and are leading an ugly, mechanical, enslaved existence. We do penance for [i.e., long for] real love. We dream of the good, happy life that one should enjoy at nighttime. We live like prisoners, cooped up within four walls. We can't satisfy our intellectual hunger. We can't show our skills. We wash the dishes that we use today, tomorrow. We rush to work, as there is no time to cook in the washed pots. We work with machines, like machines. If we had white skins we'd be paid more for the same work. We are treated like slaves. There are people we know who forget this and continue to work like dogs. Mother in one place, son in another; husband in one world, wife in another; lovers in different worlds. This is our world. Do we want more? Even if we were drinking [alcohol] and living in a hut [in Sri Lanka], we would be living a real life, surrounded by friends and relatives in the midst of our culture, working for the rehabilitation of our country. Do we stay or go?

(Tamil Elil tai, 1988).

Unlike the culture keepers oriented toward the principle of *akam*, who emphasized the need to retain "true" Tamil culture in Canada despite the negative influence of Canadian morals, those oriented toward the principle of *puṛam* feel that the "mechanical" Canadian lifestyle is necessarily incompatible with Tamil culture and is changing the Tamil nature (*kuṇam*).

8.3 Synthesis.

At the level of everyday culture, the ideological knowledge about "authenticated culture" is being constructed differently for culture keepers oriented toward the principle of "*akam*" than for those oriented toward "*puṛam*."

Those oriented toward "*akam*" are concerned that the unchaste lifestyle in Canada makes it difficult for Tamil women to maintain their purity, leading to the downfall of Tamil families and the downfall of "pure" Tamil language and culture. For culture keepers oriented toward the Tamil principle of *akam*, the process of preparing for the cultural events (dance, drama, music) which are part of the *kalai vilā* is a way of ensuring that the children will learn about their language and culture, thus preserving Tamil cultural identity in Canada.

Those oriented toward the principle of "*puṛam*" are concerned that the "mechanical" lifestyle in Canada is

incompatible with Tamil culture. They believe that it is only in an independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka that Tamil culture can survive. The fight for Eelam in Sri Lanka is a losing battle, as more and more young men flee the country and seek asylum in Canada and elsewhere, and these culture keepers feel that those who are in Montreal must do as much as possible to safeguard "Mother Tamil." The connection that is felt for the Tamil homeland is more than political, and is more than emotional -- the home (*Ur*) is connected to the physical body in a "real" way, in a relationship of contiguity, rather than merely one of emotion, and the loss of the homeland is seen to be changing the Tamil nature (*kuṇam*). For culture keepers oriented toward the Tamil principle of *puṇam*, the *kalai viḷā* are a means of preserving Tamil culture because they are a way of raising money to send back to Sri Lanka to help "the boys" in their fight for an independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka.

Although the ideological knowledge being produced about "*kalāccāram*" (authenticated culture) is divided between two different constructions of Tamil identity, and draws upon different aspects of symbols of Tamil nationalism, both share the same "commonsensical" understanding of cultural identity. The concept of the person as "dividual," with shared substances flowing in and among persons is the same for each side of the ideological divide. This is "culture"

in its classical anthropological sense (that is, pre-Writing Culture), and is what informs the authenticated image of culture.

Thus, while the ideological discourse about what Tamil culture is, is the same for Tamil culture keepers on both sides of the community divide and for the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, each is grounded in its own "commonsensical" culture. Therefore its meanings differ sharply between the (two) Tamil perspectives and that of the policy of multiculturalism, since they arise out of vastly different cultural and historical contexts.

CHAPTER NINE: MULTICULTURALISM AND MIMESIS

Taussig uses the term "magical mimesis" to mean the power of a copy to influence what it is a copy of (1993:59, 250). For the Tamils in Montreal, cultural identity is being reconstructed based on ideological knowledge stemming from two different nationalisms: Canadian nationalism, with its policy of multiculturalism and the common identity of the ethnic mosaic; and Jaffna Tamil nationalism, in its Canadian form, drawing on the symbol of *karpū* or "purity," and in its Sri Lankan form, drawing on the symbol of *Tamil Tāy*, or Mother Tamil.

Each of these nationalist images of culture is itself constructed out of multiple histories involving waves of colonialism and reconstructed identities. In Sri Lanka, British colonialism, Dravidian nationalism, and the need to be affirmed as distinct from the Sinhalese led to the emergence of a distinctive Jaffna Tamil culture. In Canada, French and English colonialism, the rise of Quebec nationalism, and the increase in Third World immigrants whose cultural identities are seen as radically different

from the French and English charter groups, all led to the emergence of a distinctive Canadian culture, oriented around multiculturalism and the symbol of the ethnic mosaic. For Tamils actively involved in promoting and preserving Tamil cultural identity in Montreal, the everyday constructions of Tamilness are debated, understood, and constructed out of the "commonsense" of these converging histories.

For Tamil culture keepers, the boundaries between being a bearer of culture and a creator of culture are constantly shifting. They are continually juggling their role as one who represents and promotes "pure" culture, with their own embeddedness in the commonsensical structures of Tamil culture and the everyday realities of the Canadian lifestyle. They must constantly take shortcuts, alter practices, and, occasionally, change the norms of what "pure" culture is, in their efforts to preserve Tamil culture.

Tamil culture keepers restructuring cultural identity at the level of the "everyday" are thus slipping in and out of the realm of the "taken-for-granted" -- at times being shaped by the structures of commonsense, and at times shaping them, moving between "meaning," and "meta-language." Given the post-colonial structure of the current global system, the "commonsensical" culture out of which "everyday" understandings of culture are constructed is one which is not uniform -- it is multifaceted, because it is the product

of many converging cultural and historical contexts. Thus, everyday constructions and understandings of culture are necessarily in flux, taking power from, and feeding back into, the original, which is itself a compound of many levels of reconstructed identity. Tamil culture keepers use the multiculturalism policy to mirror back authentic Tamilness to the Tamil community and to the Canadian public; the Canadian policy of multiculturalism uses Tamil images of Tamilness (re-interpreted through the eyes of social scientists writing on "otherness") and mirrors them back to Canadians and to Tamils. As Taussig put it, "we have here, then, a sort of figure-eight, whereby mimesis curves over into alterity, then comes back again, enlivened by a little joke" (1993:170).

On one hand, this thesis addresses academic and popular movements, such as "culture studies" and "multiculturalism," which use anthropological notions of culture as an idiom of resistance against dominant hegemonies but fail to draw on the insights of anthropology to problematize the notion of culture itself. I have illustrated that while the concept of "culture" has been appropriated for political means by two different sides of the Tamil refugee community and by the Canadian government, their "commonsensical" understandings of "culture" are radically different, because each is embedded in the specific cultural and historical context of its user.

The meaning of "culture" in multiculturalism, then, is not static, but is multivalent and dynamic. In Canada, multiculturalism is used by the media, the public, ethnocultural community leaders, and academics, in different ways to support different ideologies. Thus, even when the same image of "culture" is being used by federal policy makers and by ethnic community leaders (re)shaping their identity in Canada, it does not follow that this image of culture will have the same meaning for each of its users. Culture theorists and multiculturalists who focus on the boundaries of culture, rather than on who creates those boundaries and why, will miss this meaning aspect and its political implications.

On the other hand, this thesis responds to current attempts to provide new directions for anthropology. I contend that the theories of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and others which avoid the analysis of a culture out of fear of violating the "other" are missing an important opportunity to go even further in "decolonizing" anthropology. My research on how anthropological notions of "culture" are being used by Tamil culture keepers illustrates that "we" are still involved in shaping the "other," because in this post-colonial world, the myths and ideologies of both the dominant and subordinate cultures are part of the realm of the commonsensical of the "other" and are therefore necessarily implicated in how the "other" constructs itself.

It is my position, then, that rather than abandoning anthropology, we must attempt an anthropology of post-colonialism, focusing on the "politics" of culture, in order to reflect critically on anthropology's own continuing involvement in imperialism.

APPENDIX A: THE CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada provides that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination and that everyone has the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association and guarantees those rights and freedoms equally to male and female persons;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada and the Official Languages Act provide that English and French are the official languages of Canada and neither abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges acquired or enjoyed with respect to any other language;

AND WHEREAS the Citizenship Act provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, enjoy equal status, are entitled to the same rights, powers and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties and liabilities;

AND WHEREAS the Canadian Human Rights Act provides that every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make the life that the individual is able and wishes to have, consistent with the duties and obligations of that individual as a member of society, and, in order to secure that opportunity, establishes the Canadian Human Rights Commission to redress any proscribed discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin or colour;

AND WHEREAS Canada is a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which Convention recognizes that all human beings are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law against any discrimination and against any incitement to discrimination, and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Covenant provides that persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion or to use their own language;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes the

diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada;

(1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to:

- (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
- (b) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future;
- (c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation;
- (d) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution of Canadian society, and enhance their development;
- (e) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;
- (f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character;
- (g) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins;
- (h) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures;
- (i) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; and
- (j) advance multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada.

(2) It is further declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada that all federal institutions shall:

- (a) ensure that Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement in those

institutions;

(b) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the ability of individuals and communities of all origins to contribute to the continuing evolution of Canada;

(c) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society;

(d) collect statistical data in order to enable the development of policies, programs and practices that are sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada;

(e) make use, as appropriate, of the language skills and cultural understanding of individuals of all origins; and

(f) generally, carry on their activities in a manner that is sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada.

B.1 "veṅkāyam kollai!" ("Onions Stolen!")

helikāpṭarkaḷ, karaika āyataṅkaḷ utaviyuṭaṅ
cupparmārkkkaṭ onrutākkappaṭṭu oru kilō veṅkāyam
kaṭattappaṭṭirukkiraṭu! ippullarikka vaikkum campavam
ilaṅkai tamilarkaḷāl naṭattappaṭṭiruppatāka
teriyavarukiraṭu!

atirupti: ilaṅkai tamilarkaḷāl naṭattappaṭṭiruppatāka
ariyappaṭṭum veṅkāya kaṭattal campantamāka mēlum pala putiya
takavalkaḷ kiṭaittuḷḷaṅa. kanaṭāvil cupparmārkkkaṭṭukaḷ
iravu vēḷaikaḷil taṅkaḷ katavukaḷai irukki mūtiviṭuvatu
yāvarum aṅintatē. enavē iravil camaiyal ceyyum cila
tamilarkaḷ taṅkaḷ camiyalukku attiyāvacyyamāna veṅkāyam
vānka muṭiyāmal tavikkum apāya nilai ēṇpaṭṭatu. itaṅal
atiruptiyuṇṇa āru tamilarkaḷ helikāpṭarkaḷ iraṅṅai
vātakaikku amarṭti koṅṅaṅaṅaṅa. nakariṅ otukkuppuraṅmāka
amaintirunta cuppar mārkkkaṭ onṅai helikāpṭarkaḷ, karaika
āyutaṅkaḷ utaviyuṭaṅ tākki oru kilō veṅkāyattai kaṭatti
ceṅrirukkiraṅkaḷ.

pōḷisār payaṅkara tikaippu: campavam naṅantu muṭintapin
stalattirku vanta kaṅṅēṭiya pōḷisār, tākkutal naṭattappaṭṭa
muṅaiyai kaṅṅu tikaittaṅaṅa. cupparmārkkkaṭ arukē 24 maṅi
nēram tirantirukkum kaṅaiyonṅil veṅkāyam virkappaṭṭuvatu
terintiruntuṅkūta tākkutal naṅattiya tamilarkaḷiṅ tiramaiyai
pāraṭṭiviṭṭu, uṅaṅē avarkaḷai kaituceyyum muyarṅciyil
iṭupaṭṭaṅaṅaṅa.

karaṅṅiyuṭaṅ kaitu: kaṅattiya veṅkāyattuṅaṅ yu.es.ē
pōṅṅaril vāṅkiya āṭṭiraicciyil kaṅi camaittu koṅṅirunta
aṅaittu cantēka naparkaḷum karaṅṅiyum, kaiyumāka kaitu
ceyyappaṭṭu viṭṭatāka pinti kiṭaitta ceytikaḷ
terivikkiṅṅaṅa. ivarkaḷ, kaṅikkupōṭṭa kaṅittūḷiṅ maṅattai
vaittē vīṭiyil ceṅṅu koṅṅirunta pōḷisār palamuṅai tummiviṭṭu
avarkaḷai kaitu ceytatāka teriyavarukiraṭu. avarkaḷ
vīṭṭilirunta vēru cila veṅkāyaṅkaḷum kaitu ceyyappaṭṭaṅa.
kaitu ceyyappaṭṭa akati tamilarkaḷ ārupērum 20
vayatukkuṭṭappaṭṭavarkaḷāvar. itil aintu pēṅ iru vāraṅkaḷukku
muṅṅarē kanaṭā vanta cēntavarkaḷ enṅatum iṅku
kuṅṅiṭṭattakkatu.

B.2 "talaivarita miruntu" ("Message from the President")

amiltiṅum iṅiyatu tamilmoli. amutāna tamilmoliyai atan
ciṅṅappai araṅkattil koṅarvatarṅku vaṅikālāy iruppatu kalai
nikaḷccikaḷ. anta kalaikaḷukkellām tēvi kalaimakaḷ.
'āyakalaikaḷ aru patti nāṅkiṅaiyum ēya uṅarvikkum
ennaṅmai...' enṅu avaḷai tutipāṅi vaṅaṅkukiraṅōm. anta
arupattināṅku kalaikaḷuḷ alakaiyum, kaṅpaṅai vaḷattaiyum
karuttu paṅimāṅkaḷaiyum, kāṅṅci amaippukkaḷaiyum
uḷḷaṅakkaiyatu nāṅakakkalai. nāṅakattiṅ orupakuti nāṅṅiyam.
nāṅṅiyam, nāṅakam iraṅṅaiyum cēṅṅtu kūṅṅtu enṅu colvatu
marapu. kūṅṅtu kalaiyai 'iyal, icai, nāṅakam' enṅa mūṅṅu
tamilaḷum paṅiṅamikka ceyyalām. nāṅṅiyattirku icai

avaciyam. ānāl nāṭakattirku icaiyum tēvai iyal tamiḷum tēvai!

oru camutāya vaḷarccikku allatu atan vaḷarcciyiṅ maṟumalarccikku makkaḷuṭaṅ nōṭittoṭarpai ērpaṭuttirkolla ilakuvāna cātaṅam nāṭakamē! oru cātāraṅa mōkaṅatās kāṅtiyai 'makātmā' enra cattiya cīlārakkīyatu 'ariccantirā' nāṭakamē! intiya nāṭṭiṅ cutantira āṭcikkū pinpu ērpaṭṭa kāṅkiras nirvākattil irupatu varuṭaṅkaḷāka acaikka muṭiyāta nilaiyiliranta 'tamiḷaka aracai' māṟṟi ariṅar aṅṅā taṅatu kaṭciyāna ti, mu, ka, vai āṭcipīṭam ēṟriyamaikku ūṅrukōḷāy - makkaḷ toṭarpu cātaṅamāy viḷaṅkiyatu avarum avaratu toṭṭarkaḷum eluti naṭitta nāṭakaṅkalē!! ippaṭi nāṭaka kalaiyiṅ uyarvukku pala utāraṅaṅkaḷ kūṟalām. ivvitam uyarnta nilaiyil uḷḷatamiḷ mōliyiṅ iyal icai nāṭakakkalaikaḷai kaṭalkaṭanta nāṭukaḷilum nammavarkaḷ pōṟrippātukāṭtu vaḷarppatu avaciyam. inru ematu - nāṭu uḷḷa nilaiyil tamiḷ makkaḷ puyalil cikkiya paṭakupōḷ tattalikkirāṅkal. avarkaḷai orumaippa ṭutti uyarnta nōkkuṭaṅ ceyālarruvataṅkum nalla karuttuḷḷa nāṭakaṅkaḷai. veḷināṭukaḷil araṅkēṟruvatu avaciyam māṭṭiramaṅṟi avacaramumkūṭa. atu pōṅrē ematu nāṭṭiṅ iḷaiya talaipuraiyiṅ aṅkaṅkē vāḷum nāṭukaḷiṅ kūṭṭukkalāccārattirkuḷ cikkittanatu inmōliyiṅ taṅittuvattai kocaippaṭutti ilivupaṭuttāmal araṅ amaippataṅku itupōṅra kalaiyilākkal naṭāṭṭappaṭutal miḷa mukkiyam. intavakaiyil monriyāl nakaril iyaṅkivarukiṅra tamiḷar amaippukkaḷ ciṟanta paṅiyāṟrukiṅraṅa. itu kaṅaṭa muḷuvatum vāḷum tamiḷar mattiyil oruṅkiṅainta kalāccāra amaippāki toṭṭāṟruvatu avaciyameṅa nāṅ karutukirēṅ.

kalaimakaḷukku viḷā etukkum in nannaḷil kalaimakaḷiṅ aruḷ niraṅta ematu nāṭṭu iḷaṅkaḷaiṅkaḷai keḷaravippāṭum pāṟāṭṭuvatum kalaimakaḷukku nām vaḷaṅkum camarppaṅamāḷum. mēlum terintum teriyāmalum, aṟintum aṟiyāmalum otuṅkittiriyum kalaiyuṅarvu koṅṭa aṅaiyaraiyum araṅkattirku koṅṭuvāra ivvakai keḷaravaṅkaḷum pāṟāṭṭukkaḷum oru ūkka maruntāḷum eṅpatil aiyamillai. ivvakaiyil cila kalaiṅkaḷai innannaḷil pāṟāṭṭiyum, vāḷṭṭiyum makilkiṟōm. itu ēnaiya kalaiṅkaḷiṅnāṭu kalaiḷcēvaiya nām maṅaṅtu nirkirōm eṅa arttappaṭāṭu. avarkaḷaiyum keḷarvikkum ematu paṅi kalaiṅkaḷai aruḷāḷ niṭṭayam toṭarum. ippaṅi paratu ciṟakka kaṅaṭa tamiḷ kalāccāra caṅkattin kārpiḷ eṅ vāḷṭṭukkaḷai terivittu makilkiṟēṅ.

vāḷka tamiḷ! vaḷarka tamiḷkkalaikaḷ!! talaivar, kaṅaṭā tamiḷ kalāccāraccāṅkaḷ.

B.3 "talaivaritāmiruntu" ("From the President")

...āyirakkaṅakkilirukkum nammināttavararkaḷ iṅku onru paṭavēṅṭum, avvōṟṟumaikku vaḷivakuttu namkaṭamaikaḷai carivaru āṟrutarkaḷum, nam perumaiyai, nam maṅakkuṟaikaḷai palarum aṟintu koḷvataṅku menrē amaikkappaṭṭuḷḷatu 'onriyam'. onriyam kaṅaṭāvil vāḷum ilāttamiḷariṅ kuḷantai. kuḷantaiyiṅ vaḷarccikku nam karicaṅai, aṟivurai, utavi, pācum yāvum mikamika avaciyam. aṅkattavarkaḷ atikarippu

tēvai. atikamāna aṅkattavarkaḷ tokai nammavarkaḷ
 potunalattil kāṭṭum akkaṛaiyai paraicārrum.
 tunpattaittuṭaikku cakti atikarikka nām onrupaṭṭu
 onriyattin mūlam ceyalārra vēṇṭum. orrumaivaluvaṭaiya onru
 cēruvōm. namakkāka mātṭiram vālāmal pīraruḱkākavum koṅcam
 vāḷntu pārppōm. tamīlaiyum, tamīlinattaiyum vaḷarttu
 vālavaittu niraivu peruvōm. atanai ceyvaturku janāyaka
 muraippaṭi uru vākkappaṭṭu iyaṅkivarum onriyattil nīnkaḷ
 akkaṛaiyum ārvamum kāṭṭa vēṇṭum. onriyam natāttum
 kūṭṭaṅkaḷil paṅkuparri uṅkaḷ ālōcanaikaḷai apippirāyaṅkaḷai
 terivittu atan vaḷarccikkum nammavarkaḷ uyarccikkum
 ālamvilatukalāka nīnkaḷ nīrka vēṇṭum. curraṅkaḷ, kuraikaḷ
 āyiramiruntālum annaikkū kulantai kulantaiyē yanrivillaṅka
 muṭiyātu. tanatu vallamaikkērra aḷavu pala
 muyarcikaḷilaraṅki ceyalārrum onriyam uṅkaḷ ātaravaiyum,
 akkaṛaiyaiyum, ārvattaiyum nāṭukiratu! ettanai tunpaṅkaḷai
 yellāmō anupavittu maṅam nalintu iṅku vantu iruṅṭa
 vāḷkkaiyai tulaṅkavaikka uṭalum uḷḷamum ayarātu
 pāṭupaṭukirārkaḷ nammavarkaḷ. nām eṅkiruntu vatālum enna
 vayatiṅkaḷāyiruntālum onrai nam pāl marakka muṭiyātu.
 marakkavum kūṭṭatu atutān emminattin perumai. ematu
 ilakkiyam mikavum perumai vāyntatu. nam ilakkiya
 talaivarkaḷ, talaivikaḷ eṅṅattil ceyalil maruvarravarkaḷ.
 cakaḷ narṅkuṅkaḷum paṅapukaḷum niraṅta iṅamtamīḷinam.

B.4 "camarppaṅam" ("Dedication")

'puttāṅṭu' pīrantu viṭṭatu. āṅṭukaḷ pīrantu viraintu
 celkiṅraṅa. īlattamīlarkaḷin inṅkaḷ viṭivillaṭa toṭar
 katai pōl toṭarntu koṅṭirukkiṅratu. tamīl tonmai vāyntatu.
 tamīlar vilākkalūm kalāccāraṅkaṅam avvitamē ivaiyaṅaṅaṅa
 karuṭṭāḷamāna varalārukaḷam irukkiṅraṅa.

īlattamīlarkaḷ palvēru mēlai nāṭukaḷil vāḷntu
 varukiṅraṅar. mārupaṭṭa kalāccāracūḷ nilaiyil ematu
 varuṅkāla cantatiyīṅar vāḷappōkiṅraṅar. ivvēḷai nām ematu
 kalai, kalāccāraṅkaḷ iṅaṅta vilākkāḷai avvappōtu
 naṭattuvatan mūlam avarkaḷukku ematu kalāccāra varalārukaḷai
 eṭuttīyampaniccayam vāyppu kiṭaikkum eṅpatil aiyamillai.

etirikaḷ nammavaraikkōṅru kuvikkum tuyaram
 niraṅta niraivil tāy nāṭṭai viṭṭu ventuḷḷa nām ematu
 varuṅkāla cantatiyīṅar caṅkattamīl mūṅṅum terinta .
 kalāccāraṅkaḷuṭaṅ vaḷar ipputtāṅṭu vilāvuṭaṅ uruti
 koḷvōmāka.

B.5 "tāyai maraṅtālum tāy moliyai marakkātīr"

("Even if you Forget your Mother,
 can you Forget your Mother Tongue?")

accamillai eṅpatu kaṅaṭāvinil vāḷntu koṅṭirukku
 nam nāṭṭu maṅkaiyarkku mātṭiram urittāṅa oru collō
 eṅru nammaiyeḷḷām tikilaṭaiya vaikkiṅratu. accam, maṅam,
 nāṅam, payirppu pōṅravaruṭaṅ kāḷākālamāka vāḷntu vanta
 nam tāyṅkulamā iṅru accam aṅavē illaiyeṅrum, maṅam
 maṅappataṅku munnarum pinnarum illaiyeṅavum, nāṅam

nālum ariyatāvarkaḷ ceyvatenavum, payirppuṭaṅ vāḷntāḷ
 paratēcikaḷ pōḷ enavum eṇṇi koṇṭirukkiṅrārkaḷ....
 ivvaḷavum eṅ innum pala mārram nam maṅkaiyaṛiṭam
 ērpaṭṭuḷḷatu. vaḷamāna nam centamilaḷai vaḷarkaḷ vēṅṭiya
 tāykkullamē anniya mōḷi mōkattiṅnil alaikiṅratu.
 aṅru nān kaṇaṭāvirkū vantu iraṅṭu vāraṅkaḷtān
 āyina imikkiṛēcaṅil pativataṅkāka cenrēn. iṭaiyiṅnil
 vaḷimāri eṅkē celvatenru teriyāmal vilittu
 koṇṭiruntēn. appolūtutān iraṅṭu peṅkaḷ anniya
 mōḷiyonril pēciyapaṭi eṅakku arukāmaiyar cenranar.
 iṭaiyiṭaiyē eṭi..eṭi... eṅpatu eṅkātiṅnil viluntatu.
 eṅnuḷ ōru maṅa maḷiḷcci avarkaḷ arukiṅiṅ cenru mella
 tamilil. akkā...enrēn. iruvarum eṅnai tirumpi
 pārttuviṭṭu onrum teriyātavarkaḷ pōḷ ninrārkaḷ.
 mīṅṭum akkā...enru etaiyō kēṭpatarku vāyeṭuttēn,
 āṅāḷ akkākaḷil orutti eṅnai munti koṇṭu eṅakku
 atē anniya mōḷiyiṅiṅ patilalittār. conna anta
 corkaḷ mikavum aciṅkamāka iruntatu. eṅakku eṅtayē
 veṭittu viṭum pōḷ tōṅriyatu. eṅna tampi...enru
 aṅpuṭaṅ nam tāykkulattirukuriya paṅivutaṅ keṭpārkaḷ enru
 eṭirpārtta eṅ maṅam ēmāntu. oru nimiṭa polutiṅnil
 eṅnuḷ oru cōka kāviyamē tōṅri maraintatu. eṅnai
 camāḷitta vaṅṅamu marupakkam tirumpiya eṅnai pārttu oru
 tamil maṅaṅ punmuruval ceyya kaṅṭēn. patilukku vēṅṭā
 veruppāka nānum punmuruval ceytēn. avan eṅ arukiṅil
 vantu 'eṅna ētō mātiriyāka niṅratu pōṅriṅirukkiṅratu...'
 enru viṅāviṅār. nān viparattai kūriyapaṭi cenrēn.
 merrō varavum iruvarum uḷḷē ēriṅōm. aṅkē emakku
 arukāmaiyl anta iraṅṭu peṅmanikaḷum uṭkāntiruntanar.
 avarkaḷ emmai kaṅṭu koḷḷavillai. 'pāvam anta peṭiyaṅ' enru
 avarkaḷ atē anniya mōḷiyiṅil pēciyatu em iruvar kātilumu
 viḷantatu. nām iruvarum oruvarai oruvar pārttu koṅṭōm.
 eṅakku vaḷikūriya anta naṅapar innumonrai kūri cenrār.
 naṅanta iccampavam umakku kaṅavula vaṅakkam pōḷenru.
 em iṅiya emnāṭṭu maṅkaiyarē eppaṭiyum vāḷalām enru
 vāḷāmal ippaṭittān vālu vēṅṭum enru vāla muyarciyuṅkaḷ.
 tāyai marantālum tāy mōḷiyai marakkātīr.

B.6 "uṅmaiyaḷ colkiṅrēn" ("Speaking the Truth")

....ayaḷavar kaḷukkuttān āṅkil mōḷi terintālum
 tamil maṅaṅōṭu innumoru tamilaṅ eppaṭi tamatu mōḷiyai
 viṭuttu vēru oru mōḷiyil pēca virumpuvān. 'mulikkira muli'
 eṅ paṅpaṭṭa periyavarkaḷ ārampattilēyē yōcittu
 naṅakkakkūṭātū viṭṭilāiyātu tamatu tāy mōḷiyai eluti
 paḷākaviṭṭālum pēccu vaḷakkattilāvatu tamilaḷ
 pōticcirukkalāmallaṅvā? tamatu kalāccārattai koṅcamāvatu
 piṅparriyirukkalāmallaṅvā? perrōr kaṅmunnē ṭārliṅ eṅra
 pēccukkaḷōṭu anniya maṅaṅuṭaṅ utaṭṭukkutaṭu 'kis' 'kis'
 ataṭṭiṅāḷ 911 polis. aiyō pāvam 'ṭaṭi, mammi.'
 cēkkaskāraṅōṭu avan cāṭṭaikkū payantu kaṭṭuppaṭum ciṅkamkūṭa
 atutaṅ mōḷiyiltān karccikkum. viṭṭil ācaikkū piṭittu
 vaḷarckum kiḷi kūṭa maṅitamōḷi pēcatterintālum atu
 'kiḷki' enrutān kattum. appaṭiyenrāl. oru maṅitaṅ

vēṅṅumenrāl attanai moliyaiyum enta kalāccārattaiyum pinparralām. ānāl conta moliyaiyum tanakkenru irukkum kalāccārattaiyum marantu viṭakkūṭātu appaṭi marakka ninaippavarkaḷ verum muṭṭāḷ!

B.7 "kuḷantaiyiṅ maḷalaittamiḷ tāyiṅ karaṅkaḷilē"
("The Responsibility Lies with the Mothers")

tamiḷ Ḥlam vēṅṅum enra taniyāta tākattuṅaṅ pōrāṭa toṭaṅki viṭṭa tamiḷ camutāyam ilaṅkaiyiḷ. ettanaiyō āyirakkaṅakkāna kuḷantaikaḷ ilaṅarkaḷ, vayatānavarkaḷ enru palikoṅṅirukkum vēḷaiyiḷ uyirukku payantu vēḷināṭukaḷil taṅcam aṭaintuḷḷa enatu cakōtara, cakōtarikaḷiṭam nānta yavuṅaṅ kēṭṭu koḷvatellām, anpuḷḷa perrōrkaḷē uṅkaḷ kuḷantaikaḷukku tamiḷaiyum, tamiḷ kalāccārattaiyum collikkoṭuṅkaḷ.

"kuḷaliniṭu, yāliniṭu enpar tam makkaḷ maḷalai col kēḷāṭavar.' kuḷantaikaḷiṅ maḷalai colkaḷai kēṭṭu inpurātavarkaḷ ivvulakil uṅṅō? vēḷināṭukaḷukku vantu vaṭṭa ettanaiyō kuḷantaikaḷukku perrōraitavira vēru periyōrkaḷ viṭṭil illai. ākaiyāl mukkiyamāka kuḷantaikaḷai kavaṅikkum poruppai eṭuppavarkaḷ tāymārkaḷē. vaḷarntu varum ciṅrarkaḷiṅ maḷalai moḷi pēca ārampittatum. avarkalaikku vittu. urcākapa ṭuttavum, tiramaiyāka pēcuvataṅkum kalviyarivai. vaḷarppataṅkum vaḷi vakukka vēṅṅiyatu ovvuru tāykkum uriya mukkiya kaṭamaiyākum. vēḷināṭu vantu viṭṭa tamiḷarkaḷ palar paṅam campātippatutān mukkiyam enru ninaittu taṅkaḷ kuḷantaikaḷiṅ etirkālattai parri ciṅritum cintippatillai. kuḷantai piṅantu 2,3 mātaṅkaḷil kuḷantaikaḷai, kuḷantai parāmarippu nilaiyaṅkaḷil viṭṭu viṭṭu vēlai enru oṭukiraṅkaḷ. kaṭaiciyiḷ avarkaḷ kaṭappaṭṭu campātitta paṅamō poruḷō viḷalakkiraṅgaitta nīr pōlāki viṭukiraṭu. kuḷantaikaḷō ciruvayatiliruntē āṅkilamō piṅaṅcō pecattoṭaṅkuvatutaṅ tanniccaiyāna paḷakka vaḷakkaṅkaḷukkum vantu viṭukinraṅar. muṭivilō, poḷatu pōkkukku ṭiskōvum, cāppāṭṭirku revurōraṅṅum, kēḷpiraṅṅum, pōypiraṅṅum enru cī ciṅraḷintu viṭukinraṅar. kaṭaiciyiḷ perrōrkaḷ kaṭappaṭṭu campātitta paṅam eṅkē? ciṅritu cintittu pāruṅkaḷ perrōrkaḷē. paṅam maṭṭum tān tēvai enpatalla vāḷkkaikku. atilum mukkiyamāka tāymarkaḷ atikamāna nērattai kuḷantaikaḷuṅaṅ kaḷittu mukkiya kavaṅam celuttiṅāl tān ciṅranta kuḷantaikaḷai aṭaiya muṭiyum kuḷantai piṅakkum pōtu aṅivāḷiyāka piṅappatillai kuḷantaikaḷai ciṅranta muṅaiyiḷ vaḷarppatilētān, avarkaliṅ aṅivu mēmpaṭukiraṭu.

perrōrum viṭṭilulḷa periyōrkaḷum kuḷantaikaḷ maḷalai pēca ārampittavuṅaṅ tamiḷil ciṅru ciṅrukataikaḷ, pāṭṭukkaḷ, kollikkoṭuttu avarkaḷukku pēccu vaṅmaiyaḷi uṅṅākka vēṅṅum. itu inru toṭaṅkiya paḷakkamalla. namatu mutātaiyar kālattiliruntu tonru toṭṭu nilavivarum paḷakkamākum. itu tamiḷarkaḷiṅ paḷakkam maṭṭumalla. ovvoru pākai pēcupavarkaḷum taṅkaḷ taṅkaḷ pāsaikaḷai kuḷantaikaḷukku ippaṭittān colli koṭukkiraṅkaḷ.

3,4 vayatu varum pōtu kuḷantaikaḷiṅ manatil ēṅpaṭum palavitamāna kēḷvikaḷiṅ mulam avarkaḷiṅ aṅivu tiramaiyaḷi nām

arintu koḷḷalām. inta paruvattil kuḷantaikaḷiṅ ārvam atikamāka kāṇappaṭum. ākaiyāl avarkaḷ. kaṅkaḷil paṭum vakayil alakāna iyarkai kāṭcika uḷaiyum nanmaiyuṅṅāka kūṭiya katai. kāṭcika uḷaiyum, paṭukkaiyaraikaḷil māṭṭivitalām. pala varṇacittiraṅkaḷai varaiyavum pārkkavum paḷakkalām. veḷināṭukaḷil vālpavarkaḷ, tamīl kalai kalāccāra viḷakkakukku kuḷantaikaḷai alaṭittu celvatu mikavum ciṅanta tonrākum. ēṇēnil kuḷantaikaḷukku tamīlarkaḷiṅ palakka vaḷakkaṅkaḷai arintu koḷḷa kūṭiya orē iṭam ittān.

ciṅu kuḷantaikaḷukku nām tamīlai colli koṭuttāl avarkaḷ āṅkilam, piraṅcai paṭikātu viṭṭu viṭuvārkaḷ enru payantu pala perrōrkaḷ viṭṭilum, tam kuḷantaikaḷuṅṅān āṅkilattil kataikka murpaṭukirārkaḷ. cilar taṅkaḷ kuḷantaikaḷ āṅkilam pēcuvatu tān nākarīkaḷam enru eṅṅi kuḷantaikaḷukku tamīl colli koṭukkavē veṭkappaṭukirārkaḷ. ivaitavaṅṅa apippi rāyamākum. ciṅu kuḷantaikaḷukku nām ettānai pāṣai kaḷai colli koṭuttālum kuḷantaikaḷ attānai pāṣaikaḷaiyum viḷaṅki - pēca kūṭiya taṅmai cīkkiram ēṅpaṭukiratu. āṅāl veḷi nāṭukaḷil tamīl pēca kūṭiya nilaimai veku aritu. ataṅāl, tāymārkaḷ, kuḷantaikaḷukku viṭṭil tān tamīlai collikkoṭukka muṭiyum. (milliyaṅ tamīlarkaḷ inta ulakattil iruntum oru taṅināṭu illai. ippōtō tamīl pēca veṭkappaṭu tamīl inarē alaṅtu koṅṅirukkiratu. talai nimirntu nillaṭā, tamīlaṅ enru collaṭā).

tāymārkaḷ ovvoruvarum tam kuḷantaikaḷukku viṭṭil vācikkum paḷakkaṅkaḷai uṅṅāka vēṅṅum. appaṭi avarkaḷ tiṅamum ciṅitu nēram avarkaḷiṅ pāṭa puttakaṅkaḷai vācikkum pōtu avarkaḷiṅ kalviyarivu mempaṭuvatu pōl tiṅamum tāymār tam kuḷantaikaḷuṅṅān tamīlil kataippatiṅāl kuḷantaikaḷiṅ tamīl arivum vaḷarcciyaṭaikiratu. namatu tāynāṭṭil ettānai pēr tamīl moḷi mūlam kalvi karārkaḷ. inru avarkaḷil palar veḷināṭukaḷil ciṅanta aṅivaḷikaḷākavum periya patavi antastukaḷai aṅaintiruppataiyum pāruṅkaḷ. cintiyuṅkaḷ, centamīlaiyum ataṅ celimaiyaiyum purintu koḷvīrkaḷ. pāṅrati kaṅṅa putumai tamīl peṅkaḷē iḷamaiyāṅa niṅaivukaḷuṅṅān aṅṅu, kaṅvāna. vārṅṅai, inimaiyāṅa kaṅavukaḷuṅṅān kuḷantaikaḷuṅṅān cērntu taṅṅalamarṅa cēvaiyārṅa vēṅṅum. amaitiyākavum porumaiyuṅṅān vāḷkkai piraccānaikaḷai tīrttukōḷḷa vēṅṅum. nanparkaḷ, uraviṅārkaḷai...malarnta mukattuṅṅān upacarittu appāka paḷakuṅkaḷ. uṅkaḷ vāḷkkaiyil inta tamīl puttāṅṅu oru putu polivai taruvatai uṅarvīrkaḷ.

B.8 "tiraiivilakiyatu" ("The Curtain is Drawn")

nāṅ kaṅaṭā vantatu mutal pārkkā tuṅṅittatu eṅkaḷ cuntaraliṅkam māṅāvaiṅṅān. cuntaraliṅkam māṅā 25 varuṅkaḷukku mēḷāka kaṅaṭāvil vacittu varukirār. eṅṅataiyum oṅṅāriyōviluḷḷa oru pirapala yūṅivarsiṅṅiyil purapecarāka irukkirār evpataiyum tavira vēṅōru viparamum eṅṅaku tēriyāṅu. eppaṅiyavatu avarai cantikka vēṅṅum enru avaratu yūṅivarsiṅṅi vilācattirku oru kaṅṅitam eḷutippōṅṅu viṭṭu patilai etirpārṅṅu kāṅṅu koṅṅiruntēṅ.

eṅkaḷ paḷikkūṅṅattil paṅṅittu mutal mutalil yūṅivarsiṅṅi

enrar paṇṇiyavar cuntaraliṅkam māmā. kaṇakkil oru puli avar. kūṭavē alākāka oviyam varaivār. tamīl ilakkiyam, caṅkītam racippār pāṭavum ceyvār. appōtu avar oru olravuṅṅar enra peyarai ūr muḷuvatum perriruntār. ippō eppaṭiyirukki rō? nān ilamai niṇaiṇu kaḷil muḷkukirēn.

enakku, enatu aṇṇamārukellām kaṇakku vāttiyār cuntaraliṅkam māmātān. enta kuḷappamāna kaṇakkaiyum teḷivāka puriyum paṭiyāka coltuvār. avar kuṭavē tamīl ilakkiyattil nirampa paṇṇuvaittiruppavar. mālai vēḷaikaḷil kōvil kuḷakkaraiyarukē amarntu iyaṅkai eḷilai racittavāruparatiyār kavikitakaḷ paṭippār. tānē kavitaikaḷ eḷati koṅṅippār.

ṭelipōṅ maṇi aṭikkiratu. viraintu cenru piḷivarai eṭukkirēn. 'Hālō...vaṇakkam. nān ṭākṅar cuntaraliṅkam pēcukirēn. cāratāvōṭu pēca muṭiyumā? enakku makilcci tāl muṭiyavillai.

'hālō: māmā...tān cāratā pēcukirēn. kaṭaiciyil cuntaraliṅkam māmā kiṭaittu viṭṭār.

atē kamparamānakural. koṅcam piciru atikkirātē 'māmā ippa kaṭa uṅkalaittēn niṇaittu koṅṅiruntān. uṭānē pēcukirēn. nūru vayacuvārai irukka pōriyaḷ.

'o...appaṭiyā kaṭṭai pompalē...' atukkenna iruntāppōccu...atu cari - nī eppa kaṇaṭā vantu cērntām...?

cinna vayatil ennai kaṭṭai pompilāi enru kēli ceyvār. māmā ippōtum atē peyarai colla makilcci poṅkiyatu. toṅarntu oru arai maṇi nēram ṭelipōṅnil pēci koṅṅiruntōm. kaṭaiciyil avar moṅriyāl vantu ennaiyum kuṭumpattaiyum cantippatāka vāku koṅṅutta pintān ṭelipōṅ vaittēn.

'enna cāratā...orē cantōṣamāyirukkirām pōla...' enravāru uḷḷē nuḷaikirār. en kaṇavar. kūṭavē en iru piḷlaikaḷum mammi ena kūviyapaṭi pāṭacālai muṭinta cantōcattil oṭi vantu enaikkaṭṭi koḷkirārkaḷ.

kuḷantaikaḷai aṇaittavāru cuntaraliṅkam māmā pōn paṇṇinār. aṭutta kiḷamai moṅriyāl vantu eṅkaḷai pārkkirārām. ena kuṇavaṇiṭam collikka kutū kalittēn. atu tānē pārttēn. āyiram viḷantāl kaṭa ivvaḷavu cantōcappaṭa mātṭāyē...' ena kēli ceytu cirittu koṅṅē uḷḷepōṅār eṅkaṇavar. kaṭaiciyāka connatu pōla māmā eṅkaḷ viṭṭukku vantār.

aimpatu vayatu aṇmikkum teḷivāna tōṅram mukkukaṇṇāṭi - mupṇātiyil vaḷakkaikaṭavē oraḷavu naraitta talai...avarai pārttu nān viyantatai viṭa ennai pārttu avar viyantatu tān atikam.

atē cinna pompalē - itu nītānā - kiḷavimātiri pōyiṭṭiyē - kēliceytu koṅṅē uḷḷevantu amarntār. en kaṇavaraiyum piḷlaikaḷaiyum aṇimukam ceytuvaittēn. cirikkaccirikka pēcinār. piṅaku eṅkaḷ ūrai, paḷlikkaṭattai paṇṇi vicārittār. nāykaḷ kaṇaṭā vantu cērnta kataiyai kēṭṭār.

nāṅkaḷum eṅkaḷ vāḷkkai vaḷi muraikaḷai ṭā pōrāṭṭam paṇṇi kataikaḷai collaccola kaṇ kalaṅkiyavāru kēṭṭukkoṅṅiruntār. kaṭaiciyil kalavarakāḷaṅkaḷil nāṅkaḷum kuṭumpamum paṭṭa kaṭaṅkaḷai conna pōtu amutē viṭṭār.

māmā...tamiḷaṅṅāy piṅantu nāṅkaḷ paṭṭa kaṭaṅkaḷ eṅkaḷ etirikku kūṭa varakkaṭātu māmā tamiḷaṅṅā taṇmāṇattōṭu vāḷa

piraku anātaikaḷ ākiviṭuvirkaḷ... māmāviṇ kuralil eṇakku pāratiyār terintār. curru nēram pēci koṇṭiruntu viṭṭu viṭai perrukkoṇṭu cenru viṭṭār māmā.

'mammi....' eṇravārē enniṭam neruṅkukinraṇar eṇ kulantaikaḷ. "'mammi" eṇru inimēl colla kuṭātu. "ammā" eṇru kūppiṭa vēṇum' eṇa tamilil kūriyapaṭiyē kulantaikaḷai anaikkirēṇ.

atai āmōcippatu pōla pārkkirār eṇ kaṇavar.

B.9 "eṇruvarum anta cukam?"
("When Will We Get that Wellbeing?")

maṇmenra cutiraiyēri
tinmeṅkaḷ ilamṇōkki
vaṇa menum vītitāṇṭi
kaṇattilē parkkinrōm.

piṇamāka (inṅku) vāḷkinrōm - tinam
paṇattaiyē eṇṇukinrōm - tamil
kuṇattaiyē mārrukinrōm - em
inattaiyē tūrrukinrōm.

kaṇavānā vāla - nāmum
kaṇaṭāvai vantu cērntōm.
kaṭuṅkuḷir taṇilē inṅkum
paṭuṅ kaṣṭam yāraṇivār.

koṭuṅkōlan muṭiviṇ piṇ - an
neṭuṅ kōla mara nilalil
paṭuṅkārrai mukarntilutta
viṭuṅkoṇṭal cukam varumā?

āyiram nāṭu kaṇṭum
aṇaittilum vāḷntiruntum
aṇṇaiyiṇ pūmitarum - av
arum cukam kāṇavillai.

B.10 "aṇṇē kaṇaṭāvil" ("Elder Brother is in Canada")

civarāṅcan: eṇna cinnaiyā aṇṇē! eppaṭi pōkutu vaḷkkai!
ēleṭṭu mātama kāṇam! eṅku vēlai ceyyirayaḷ!

cinnaiyā: aiyō tampi ataiyēṇ paraivāṇ āru pēr nāṅkaḷ atu
kuḷḷa vīṭu kaṭṭura teṇṭā cummāvā collu.

S: periyavaṇ pāla atukkuppiṇ nālupēr vīṭṭil tānā
irukkiyiṇamaṇṇē.

C: ellōrum vēlai ceyyiṇam tampi avarinra peyarukkum
aṇṇampalam varukutu āḷukku iraṇṭu cīṭṭu pōṭukiram atukku piṇ
eṇna miṇcapōkutu.

S: unkaṭa peṭiyaḷ yārum ūrila iyakka meṇṭu pōṇa vayaḷē.

C: tampi eñkaṭa talaiyil koñcam carakku irukkutu pōna peṭiyānai poyyai colli piṭittu koṇṭu vantu cērttiṭṭaṇ añka enra viṭutān tampi atattān ārum eṭukka pōrān atukkum āḷ pōṭṭirukkirān. iruntum koñcam payamāyirukku.

S: iñku iyakka peṭiyaḷ yārum nōṭṭis koṇṭu vāravīyaḷē vantā ētum aifca patta koṭuttu koñcam aravaṇaippiyaḷē.

C: aiyō tampi. avañkaḷa vācal paṭiyil viṭṭā aṭikkaṭi vantu āykkina tārāñkaḷ atañālatānē katavai pūṭṭi kāriyam velluraṇ.

S: iyakka peṭiyaḷ aṭipaṭutukaḷ ataipparri enna ninaikkirīr aṇṇē.

C: nānum vantu akati aṭiccu kuṭumpamum vantu koñcam vacatiyāy irukkirām tampi atu pōla atukaḷum iñkina vantu velveyār eṭuttu enna vāḷkkai vāḷalām tampi ēn tān añka aṭipaṭutuka!

S: illai - aṇṇē eñkaḷu koru nāṭu vēṇum atu tān pāvam aṭipaṭutukaḷ.

C: nānum aimpatu varucamā urila vāḷntanān tampi kūppan arici vāḷkkaikku nānum U.N.P. āṭkaḷiṇ kāḷil viḷantu kaṭṭāyam vēlai eṭuttiṭa muṭiyum ciñkaḷ aracu ippaṭi ceyttu ciṇucukaḷ vantu cīri pāyantu cīraḷivākki pōṭṭutu tampi.

S: enna katai nīrā kataikkirīr kānum eñkaṭa nāṭu enru colla enna tān añku irukkutu collum manicaṇ enraṇaṇ manicaṇāy vāḷa manita cutantiram iruntatō pārum aṭimai paṭṭu aṭikkāl piṭittu vaḷvatu ellām vāḷkkaiyē collum nīrum nāḷai olintu viṭṭāl nīr perra piḷḷaikku nāṭutān ētu tāy moli enru pēcuvatarṅku āñkil monraiyē paṭippikkirīr appiḷikkēcaṇ pōmila kūṭa tāy moli enna? tāy nāṭenna? enru kēḷvi kēṭṭu viṭṭāl tarittiṭum kaṇaṭātāy nāṭācumā cirittiṭa māṭṭānā conta kāraṇ.

C: umakku koñcam putti colla ninaikiraṇ tapipi carru kēḷum nīram pārttu iraṇṭu vēlai ceytu koñcam miccam piṭittu nallavaṇ mātiri periyavaṇ mātiri vāḷantiṭalāmē ākum cettu ārum aḷintu pōṭṭum tampi atukaḷ eṇṇi maṇam nōkām aḷḷira nēram aḷḷi koḷ tampi.

S: aṇṇē nān tān cinna paiyan āyinum en nuḷ ōṭuvatellām annaiyām tamiḷiṇ anpurattam inru piṇantu nāḷai aliyalām iruntum ennāl iyaṇra varaikkum annaiyām tamiḷiṇ māṇam kaḷaivēn atuvē ovvoru tamiḷaṇ kurikkōḷ tampi enakku ippatān. putti vantatu pārum ennāl enna nāṭṭukkulāpam iruntu cāvatiḷ ennatān lāpam maṭattanamāka iruntiṭṭaṇ tampi matiyukam koṇṭa puttiyai kēṭṭu nāḷai kaḷattil irañkiran pārum.

B.11 "Murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum"
(Earth from our Yard that I Want")

kālaiyil eḷantu miṭaru kōppiyum maṇantu caikkil

cālaiyil mitittu aiyā mātakal karaikku cenru
 ōlaiyil konarnta mīnin nāṭi cūṭāra munnē
 tōlaiyum kaḷainta vintai kaṇṭu nām kaḷittirunta
 eṅkaḷ murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum.

paccaiyāy māvarittu varuttu atil puṭṭavittu
 iccayāy campuluṭaṇ patamāna iṇul kulampum
 moccai maṇam carrumarra cuṭṭa karuvaṭum tara
 koccaiāy nān kutappum kōlam ammā kaṇṭirunta
 eṅkaḷ murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum.

īramāy ney taṭavi mīcaiāyai murukki appu
 vīramāy paṭiyiraṅka, vaḷukka nān pāynta taṅka
 pāramāy irunta tannai tūkkiṇān pēraṇeṇru
 cāramāy ūravarmuṇ cānrukaḷ pala molinta
 eṅkaḷ murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum.

vēṇṭiyē ācciyainān palamuṇai naccarikka
 pāṇṭi viḷaiyāta venru kokkaiyāl puḷi utirttu
 nōṇṭiyē vitai eṭuttu alaci atai kāyavaittu
 kāṇṭīpa kaṇattil vaira mutiraiyil palakai ceyta
 eṅkaḷ murrattumaṇ vēṇṭum.

taṅkai un calipputtira tēkkumara vāṅka pōṭṭu
 vēnkaiyāy vāḷntu vīḷnta kaṇṇaiṇ caritai colla
 kaṅkaiyāy kaṇṇil īram piṇantu un kaṇṇamēṭṭil
 caṅkaiyāy nimitam vāḷntu utaṭṭilē marikka kaṇṭa
 eṅkaḷ murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum.

taṇamuṇṭu vantāṇṭil vaḷamāna vālvumuṇṭu - em
 inamuṇṭu kūṭivāḷa, kuṭittāna muṇṭu - āṇal
 maṇakuṭal paḷacaiyellām camikkavē maṇuppatālē
 kaṇavuṇṭem murramaṇṇil cantati vaḷaravaikka
 eṅkaḷ murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum.

korattu kataikaḷellām ettikkum paravi nirṅum - em
 murrattu maṇṇil tāṇem curattu kataikaḷ tokkum
 parrarru entān āvi paralōkam pōkaiyilē
 murrattu maṇṭān eṇ caḷalattil tūvēṇṭum - atarku
 eṅkaḷ murrattu maṇ vēṇṭum.

B.12 "aispeṭṭi" ("The Icebox")

mulumaiyil innāṭu mulunīḷa aispeṭṭi
 mēṇpatuti paṇikūṭi malaipōl paṇikkaṭṭi
 mūkkālum cinta mūcciluttu mūṭikkaṭṭi
 atanuḷḷē nāmellām araiyuyir caṭappeṭṭi
 kiḷtaṭṭil kiḷaṅkuvakai kīraiyaṭaṇ veṅkāyam
 kiḷvaciyum kiḷmakkaḷ kālvaruṭam kiḷukiḷuppu
 kālāṇṭu kālteriya kāṇcaṭṭai kārttikaiyil muluccaṭṭai
 kaṭumpaṇi kāṇpaṇṭān kaṇpoḷiyum kuḷircaṭṭaikālamāri
 kaṭumveyil vantaṭṭāḷ kaṇaperkku irukkātu - kaccai.
 kālṇaṭaiyāy tirivatenrāl kaṇaṭāvil yāriruppār
 kārkuṭa kaṭumpaṇiyil 'highway'yil ninruviṭum

putukkār enru perumaikoļvōr 'push'kēṭṭum nirpatuṅṭu
 vayatuvarā ciricukaḷum vāyāra pukai viṭuvatuṅṭu
 iḷacukaḷō inkum aṅkum itaḷcērttunirpatuṅṭu
 ivaikaṅṭu emmavarum eṭṭipārppatuṅṭu
 cuvaikaṅṭāl centamiḷar cuṇaṅkapōvatuṅṭō?
 mayiruḷḷa mirukattōḷ mēlmēlum pōrttālum
 araivāci āruyirō āṭippōy ayarntuvara
 naṭunaṭuṅki namakkellām nātē veruppatuṅṭu
 cetta 'chicken'pōḷ centamiḷar nām otuṅki
 pittattil piraṇāṭṭil piḷaippatāy oruninaippu
 mottattil ittēcam mutalāḷikkōr matippu - iruntālum
 emtōḷar tōḷkoṭuttu ērramurā ettanippu!

B.13 "poṅkalē, varuka...!" ("To Stay or to Go...?")

erpūṭṭi vāḷntiṭum uḷava vellām koṅṭāṭivarum ōr nannāḷ
 innāḷilum munnāḷil inkivarkaḷ kaṅṭa tērōṭṭi kāla tanniraivu
 vāḷvu miṅṭumiṅkē naṅrāka vērōṭi celittu vaḷarntiṭum kālam
 viraiivil amaintiṭa poṅkalē varuka maṅkaḷam taṭuka.

vērrumai yellām vērō ṭaḷintu ivvaiyakamenkum orrumai
 nalleṅṅa mōṅka yāvaram muramataiṭaṅ pāṭupaṭṭu kāṅṅiṅku
 pukāta vaṅṅam namakkuḷ nallaṅṅapai vaḷartteṭuttu parruppāca
 mennum valaiyiṅuḷ vāḷam kālam malarntiṭa poṅkatē varuka
 maṅkaḷam taṭuka.

nāṅ enra akaṅkāraṅkoṅṭō pellām ini inkoṭukaṅam
 onippaṭiyāṅōm enru carru cintittu ceyalpaṭṭu tēncirtum
 vāḷkkaiyonrai tēcameṅkum amaittelappa vanmurai valikaḷai
 vilakkiviṭṭu vāṅpirai vāḷvu utittil poṅkalē varuka maṅkaḷam
 taṭuka.

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TAMIL AND SANSKRIT TERMS

Ācaraṇam: Custom, practice, usage.

Aippaci: The Tamil month of October-November.

Akam: Interior, associated with femaleness and love.

Akkā: Elder sister.

Ammā: Mother.

Āṇi: The Tamil month of June-July.

Annaiyiṇ pūmi: Mother's earth.

Annaiyāṁ tamiḷ: Mother Tamil.

Apiṣēkam: The bathing of an idol with water, oil, ghee, milk, honey and other substances.

Aṛam: The search for righteousness; one of the maxims of the *Tirukkuraḷ*.

Āṭi: The Tamil month of July-August.

Auvaīyar: One of the Tamil poet-saints.

Āvaṇi: The Tamil month of August-September.

Bhārata nāṭyam: Classical South Indian dance.

Cakti: Female energy, ability, power, strength.

Cāmartti: A girl who has attained the age of puberty.

Cāmarttiyakkaliyāṇam: The rite of first menstruation.

Cambāl: A type of savory dish.

Caṅkam: An academy or fraternity; Tamil literature from the period prior to 200 A.D., and dating back as far as 1000 B.C.

Centamiḷ: Pure or refined Tamil, free from all corruptive elements.

Cittirai: The Tamil month of April-May.

Cīṭṭu: A lottery system of bartering for pooled money.

Cukam: Wellbeing; that which is good, wholesome, beneficial; ease, comfort; happiness, pleasure, enjoyment.

Cumaṅkali: A women who is married and thus auspicious.

Cuttam: Purity, cleanliness, moral purity; authenticity; entireness; correctness, faultlessness; being unmixed, unadulterated; innocence.

Cuttam illātu: Impure, unclean (opposite of *cuttam*).

Dharma (Sanskrit): Code for conduct.

Durga (*Türkā*): The warrior goddess.

Inam: Race; also class, group, division, kind, clan, tribe, or fellowship.

Inbam: The search for happiness; one of the maxims of the *Tirukkuraḷ*.

Iyantiram: Machine.

Kaivicēṭam: The giving of money or new clothing by the head of the family during important festivals.

Kalāccāram: Culture; the practice of the arts.

Kalai: Art.

Kalai vila: Cultural festival.

Kalam: Time.

Kaliyāṇam: Wedding.

Kaṇṇaki: Heroine of the Tamil epic *Cilappaṭikāram*.

Kaṇṇūru: "Evil eye"; causing sickness or misfortune.

Kapha: Phlegm, one of the three bodily humours. In colloquial Tamil, the term is *kūḷir*.

Karmam: Action.

Karpu: The chastity of a woman, especially virginity before marriage and faithfulness to her husband afterwards, which produces a power (*cakti*) of benefit to her family.

Kārttikai: The Tamil month of November-December.

Kaṣṭam: Obstacle.

Kōlam: A purified, ordered space within which the gods are called down.

Kolu: Decorations in the house at the time of the Navarāttiri festival.

Koṭuntamiḷ: Impure Tamil.

Kōyil: Temple.

Kuḷir: Coolness, a disorder of the phlegm.

Kumpam: "Full-pot"; a decorated brass vessel which serves as a representation of the gods in Hindu religious ceremonies. Also known as *niraikuṭam*.

Kuṇam: Substance, attribute, property, quality; character; opinion, belief; moral and spiritual qualities of persons.

Kuṇamākkutal: To cure, heal, restore to health.

Kuṇamaṇi: Person of excellent character.

Kuṭumbam: Family.

Kūttu: Drama and dance.

Lakṣmī: The goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Liṅkam: The phallic-shaped representation of Siva.

Māci: The Tamil month of February-March.

Mahāsivarāttiri: The festival celebrating the night of Siva.

Mārkaḷi: The Tamil month of December-January.

Muṟai: Rules, order; customs by which dignity and civilization are maintained.

Murukan: The god of six faces, the second son of Siva, also known as Skanda, Karttikeya or Subramaniam.

Muttamiḷ: "Three-fold" Tamil, referring to *iyal* (grammar), *icai* (music) and *nāṭakam* (drama).

- Muttamil viḷā:** A festival celebrating Tamil culture.
- Naṭarāja:** The god Siva in his incarnation as cosmic dancer.
- Nāṭu:** Land.
- Navarāttiri:** The festival of the nine nights.
- Niraikuṭam:** See *kumbam*.
- Oruvaṇukku oruti:** Monogamy (literally, one woman to one man).
- Pañcāṅkam:** Tamil almanac.
- Paṅkuṇi:** The Tamil month of March-April.
- Paṇpaṭu:** Culture, in the sense of something that one has; to become refined or reformed; to be suitable for tillage, as land; to be obedient, submissive; to help, serve.
- Pāṇṭi:** A game played with a tablet of fourteen pits filled with dried seeds.
- Pārvati:** The goddess who is the wife of Siva and is upheld as being an ideal wife and mother.
- Periyappiḷḷaikkaliyāṇam:** Rite of first menstruation ("big-child wedding").
- Piḷḷaiyar:** The god who is elephant-headed; the eldest son of Siva. Also known as Ganesha or Ganapati.
- Piracātam:** Consecrated offerings, including holy ash, sandalwood paste, consecrated water, flowers, and vermilion powder.
- Pitta:** Bile, one of the three bodily humours; in colloquial Tamil, the term is *cutu*.
- Piṭṭu:** A type of confectionary made from a compressed and steamed mixture of rice flour and grated coconut.
- Poṅkal:** Boiled milky rice; the harvest festival which occurs in the month of *tai*.
- Poruḷ:** The search for wealth; one of the maxims of the *Tirukkuraḷ*.
- Poruḷ:** Meaning or substance.

Poṭṭu: The forehead marks of Saivites, made from sandalwood paste, vermilion powder, and/or holy ash.

Pūja (pūcai): Temple ritual.

Puṛam: Exterior, associated with maleness and war.

Puraṭṭāci: The Tamil month of September-October.

Puttāṇṭu: New Year.

Rasa: Strength.

Rutukkaliyāṇam: Rite of first menstruation.

Sarasvati: Goddess of learning.

Suriyan (Cūriyaṇ): God of the sun.

Tai: The Tamil month of January-February.

Tai poṅkal: The harvest festival.

Tamiḷ akam: Tamil self.

Tamiḷ tāy: Mother Tamil.

Tanṇir vārkiṛatu: Ritual bath, part of the rite of first menstruation.

Tirunīṇṇavu: Sacred ash, the Saivite mark.

Tōṣam: Disorder, defect; an imbalance of the three bodily humours, or an affliction brought on by astrological forces; fault, sin, guilt; illness due to the evil eye.

Tuṇṇam: Grief, sorrow, affliction, distress, trouble; physical pain; disease, ailment; misfortune, calamity.

Tuṭakku: Bodily pollution.

Ūr: Village, home.

Uṭampu: Outer body, body as a totality.

Uyir: Self, life, breath.

Vaikāci: The Tamil month of May-June.

Vaḷakkam: Usage, practice, habit, custom; that which is ordinary and common.

Vāni: The goddess Sarasvati.

Vāni viḷā: Part of the worship of the goddess Vāni or Sarasvati, associated with the festival Navarāttiri.

Vāta: Wind, one of the three bodily humours. In colloquial Tamil, the term is *kiranti*.

Vēlvi: A special puja where a ritual sacrifice is done by the priest to help to relieve a major calamity, such as drought, civil war, etc.

Vēṇṭum: Want/need.

Vijayatacami: The tenth day of *navarāttiri* and conclusion to that festival. It marks the day when Durga secured a victory over the buffalo demon.

Viḷā: Festival.

Viḷakkum: Oil lamp, light.

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