

**IRA-International Journal of Education & Multidisciplinary Studies**  
ISSN 2455-2526; Vol.07, Issue 03 (2017)  
Pg. no. 261-269  
**Institute of Research Advances**  
<http://research-advances.org/index.php/IJEMS>



## **Cultural Memory and the Sri Lankan Civil War in Shobaskthi's Short Story, 'The MGR Murder Trial'**

**Dr. Preetha Vasan**

Professor in Jyoti Nivas College, Post Graduate Centre, Bangalore, India.

---

**Type of Review:** Peer Reviewed.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jems.v7.n3.p11>

### **How to cite this paper:**

**Vasan, P.** (2017). Cultural Memory and the Sri Lankan Civil War in Shobaskthi's Short Story, 'The MGR Murder Trial'. *IRA International Journal of Education and Multidisciplinary Studies* (ISSN 2455-2526), 7(3), 261-269. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jems.v7.n3.p11>

---

© Institute of Research Advances



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License subject to proper citation to the publication source of the work.

**Disclaimer:** The scholarly papers as reviewed and published by the Institute of Research Advances (IRA) are the views and opinions of their respective authors and are not the views or opinions of the IRA. The IRA disclaims of any harm or loss caused due to the published content to any party.

---

**ABSTRACT**

*This paper looks at the intersection of cultural memory, war and literary narrative in the specific context of the civil wars that raged Sri Lanka. It would consider the dynamics of cultural memory of an ethnic minority group during a civil war. To achieve this, the paper would attempt a close study of Shobasakthi, the Tamil Eelam writer's titular short story "The MGR Murder Trial" from his short story anthology. The use of a popular cultural icon is deliberate in the story. The paper would consider the symbolism of this usage and thereby arrive at the author's response to the civil war.*

Assmann and Czaplicka define cultural memory as "that body of reusable texts, images and rituals in each society, in each epoch" (98). Through the "cultivation" of this memory they point out a society stabilizes and conveys its self-image. Upon this collective memory, one can add, each society bases its unity and peculiarity. Through this cultural heritage, they add, a society becomes visible to others. Further as Astrid Erll points out, Cultural Memory Studies is an "interdisciplinary study" involving the relationship between culture and memory. He states that this study involves fields like history, sociology, art, literary and media studies, philosophy, theology and psychology and the neurosciences (1).

From the time man began building settlements, and gradually establishing distinctions, wars, conflicts and battles have been ongoing issues. Though it is possible to generalize and see all battles, war and strife as conflicts, the divergence of their causes, characteristics, and consequences make the nature of these wars distinct from each other. The reasons for these wars have changed over time, becoming increasingly complex and composite from the crusades to dynastic battles, to conflicts between nations, the latter escalating to the two world wars. Conflicts thus have ranged from world wars to anti-colonial struggles to civil wars to large scale communal conflicts to mob violence to international terrorism. War has many fall-outs. Like the Nigerian poet John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo states "The casualties are not only those who are dead". Literary writings have represented many facets of war ranging from the great epics like The Mahabharatha to our postcolonial postmodern writings on terrorism, genocide and exile. In order to understand the context of the narrative of Shobasakthi's story, it is necessary to briefly consider the many trajectories of the Sri Lankan civil war.

Sometimes called the pearl of the Indian Ocean, meaning resplendent in Sinhala, once described by travellers as a paradise and named by Arab seafarers as Serendib, Sri Lanka was what an Eighteenth Century writer had in mind when he coined the word "serendipity". However the nation's gruesome and protracted civil wars have reduced these myriad nomenclatures to the poignant-"Tear drop in the Indian Ocean." In the Sri Lankan context multiple historicisations, various narratives of the same history occur since the nation is marked by a diversity of ethnic, religious and linguistic identities. These include Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Indian Tamils, Muslim moors, Tamil Christians, and the Eurasian Burghers.

Historians, political science scholars Richardson, Stokke and others have located different reasons for the civil strife in Sri Lanka to understand why and how simmering ethnic differences escalated into a full scale insurgency movement. The primordialists see the ethnic difference between the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils as primordial-inherent, inborn and immutable. The constructivists argue that ethnic identities and differences are constructed, as a result of political environment and circumstance, and not genetically transferred. Other scholars emphasize the pre-colonial roots of the conflict, but colonial history theorists contend that the contemporary ethnic tensions were shaped by colonial politics of inclusion and exclusion, divide and rule policies, promotion of one ethnic group over the other like the resentment of the Sri Lankans of the perceived Tamil advantage (over-represented in higher education and public sector employment). The above mentioned commentators singularly blame elite political leaders who in the postcolonial period mobilized along ethnic cleavages to win support and strengthen their position like the Ceylon Citizenship Act in 1948, the 1956 Official Language Act (also known as the Sinhala Only Act). The exploitation of ethnic tensions in electoral politics and ethnic outbidding of opponents by elite

politicians like Sirimavo Bandaranaike's blatant anti-Tamil policies and the constitutional declaration of 1972 which declared the state as a Sinhala- Buddhist state, paved the way for civil war.<sup>1</sup> Eminent Sri Lankan historian, K.M. de Silva, offers an important argument to support the Sinhalese nationalist view point. The Sinhalese, he observes, have lived in Sri Lanka for more than 2500 years while the Tamils have lived in the country for only about 1500 years. Despite their Indian origins, they have developed their distinct culture and speak a language not spoken elsewhere. The affinity of the Sri Lankan Tamils with the millions of Tamils in South India has made the Sinhalese according to de Silva, "a majority with a minority complex" (513).

The civil war that broke out after the July pogroms of 1983 was fought in many phases and caused tremendous loss to people, property, economy, the environment. During these 30 years the LTTE with its attack on civilians through suicide bombings transformed from a militant nationalist organisation to a world terrorist organization. As the University Teachers for Human Rights group emphasizes in "The Growth of Tamil Militancy" in *The Broken Palmyra* the popular base of the militants gradually wore away ( paras5.1-5.5). The LTTE that killed all its dissidents like the people activist doctor Rajani Thiranaganama, was no longer seen by all Tamils as their sole representative and turned from heroes to oppressors. As for the Sri Lankan government and its armed forces in the name of national defence, it violated human rights, unleashed pogroms, state sponsored terrorism that many times reached genocidal proportions. In May 2009, the Sri Lankan government announced that the war had ended with the defeat of the LTTE, arguably one of the most successful, multifaceted and rich guerrilla organization in the world.

Some of the significant Sri Lankan literary writings, in Sinhalese, Tamil and English, began with the July 1983 carnage. Shobasakthi was born in the 1960's and hails from Mandaitivu a small island off the coast of Jaffna peninsula. Born as Anthony Dasan, when he was fifteen, Shobasakthi joined the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Movement (LTTE) like countless others of his generation. However, Shobaskthi left Sri Lanka in his late teens and made his way to Thailand as an international refugee. After an extended stay in many of the places that fall within the itinerary of the undocumented traveller, he arrived in Paris in the early 1990s. In France he has chosen to find employment at the minimum wage level which gives him freedom to write. A fearless writer his works are powerful political denunciations of varied power structures of Sri Lanka, France and India. Three of his works *Gorilla*, *Traitor* and *The MGR Murder Trial*, have been translated into English. They document with dark humour the cataclysmic periods of the civil wars in Sri Lanka.

Speaking about the Eelam struggle and the in-fighting between the various Tamil groups Shobasakthi observes that "none of the Tamil movements had any kind of politico-philosophical outlook. Even if they mouthed off about socialism and Marxism, these were empty words for all of them lusted after armed struggle and based their actions on excitable feelings rather than reflection" (interview with Bhakthi Shringarpure *Warscape*). He is also powerfully critical of the political manipulations of the Indian government and its role in the different phases of the Eelam wars.

Cultural memory and its loss in the context of the trauma of war is the central commentary of the titular story "The MGR Murder Trial". The story is narrated in the first person by an unnamed narrator, who through autobiographical associations one can probably assume, is Shobasakthi. The story revolves around three figures - the young Donas, Parimalakanthan who is nicknamed "MGR" and the cultural icon M.G.Ramachandran (politician and superstar of Tamil cinema from 1950's to the 1970's). The outer frame takes place in Paris and the inner story in Allaipiddy a Tamil village near Jaffna. Donas, a young Tamil arrives from Allaipiddy in Sri Lanka to Paris. When he meets fellow refugees from his home town he hopes he will be included into this exilic clique. The exilic group however believe Donas has been actively involved in many killings and kidnapping spear headed by the LTTE. But Donas denies he is a "kotti" and in fact states that he belongs to a rival organisation, EPRLF. While the frame story narrates Donas' mistake in killing Parimalakanthan, whom he assumes is the cultural icon M.G.Ramachandran, the inner story remembers the cultural milieu of Allaipiddy in general and Parimalakanthan in particular.

Assmann argues that every culture connects every one of its individual subjects on the basis of shared norms and stories to the experience of a commonly inhabited meaningful world (qtd in Harth, 86). In the inner story “the shared norms” that frame the narrator’s generation in Allaipiddy are the films of the culture icon M.G.Ramachandran (fondly remembered by his followers as M.G.R). As the narrator tells us “Instead of naming our village Allaipiddy, it could have been called MGR-piddy” (42). It is because of this experience of the films, that individuals of the narrator’s generation are able to frame their personal identity. The cultural icon of MGR becomes the orientating symbol of identity of their social world. These symbols are embodied in objectified forms like- the associated paraphernalia of films ; songs, dialogues, action scenes, posters and so on- of a commonly shared cultural tradition.

The translator of the anthology, states that the titular story acts as a “metaphor for a whole structure of feeling”. She also comments that the story is a commentary on the painful phenomenon of Donas’ upbringing in a war-ridden-land. Donas’ generation, born and brought up during the civil war has no idea about these “shared norms” of his previous generation. Donas she says lacks “cultural literacy “and the story is a “symbol of the painful loss of communal memory”. The paper will explore further the complexities of this “communal” and cultural memory which is lost in the context of the civil war.

In order to understand the zeitgeist of Allaipiddy, during the narrator’s generation, it is important to briefly explicate the background, fame, aura and image that surrounded the iconic MGR. Hardgrave Jr, and Anthony C. Neidhart. trace the growth of MGR. He was born in Kandy, Sri Lanka in 1917 to a family of devout Hindus. He went on to become an iconic political figure. However, before MGR became a shining political figure, it was the Tamil film industry that paved his way to popularity. Hardgrave Jr comments on the fame of M.G.R.”Known as Vadiyar, (“teacher”), Puratche Nadigar, (“revolutionary actor”), and as Makkal Thilagam, (“idol of the masses”), M.G.R. was the symbol of hope for the poor in South India. He supported orphanages and schools and was always the first to give for disaster relief (298-299). The rickshaw man is regarded as the archetype of the M.G.R. fan, the poor man of the labouring classes. The M.G.R. film is a morality play in which good inevitably triumphs over evil. The villain is the embodiment of evil, unrelieved in his darkness except in the love he holds for his beautiful daughter. The hero (M.G.R.) is all virtuous. The films are filled with references which blur the role and the actor into one. Indeed, for the M.G.R. fan, the man is a projection of his screen image. (298-299).

The film industry in Tamil Nadu had been intimately woven into politics ever since the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) was formed in 1949 by writer and playwright C. N. Annadurai. But in 1972 the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, later named the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), was formed after the death of Anna Durai and MGR’s fall-out with his party. MGR used his popularity both as an actor and as a public figure to make the AIADMK a successful political party that would go on to achieve sweeping victories over many elections. In 1977, the AIADMK won state Assembly elections for the first time and MGR was sworn in as the seventh chief minister of the state. He remained in power till his death in 1987, winning three consecutive elections.

MGR was always a matinee idol among Sri Lankan Tamils, but he came close to their heart only when he started supporting the Eelam Tamil movement in the early 1980s. Sri Lankan Tamils considered MGR as “more sincere” in his support for the cause of Tamil Eelam as compared to his Tamil Nadu political rival, M.Karunanidhi. Though both Karunanidhi and MGR supported the Eelam movement, MGR went the extra mile and gave millions of rupees to the LTTE led by Velupillai Prabhakaran. MGR intuitively felt that the LTTE, led by Prabhakaran, would turn out to be more effective than the other Tamil militant groups which he shunned. However, given the overwhelming power of the Indian Central government, MGR gave his assent to the India-Sri Lanka Accord in July 1987 though it negated an independent Eelam. Grateful for the assent, the Indian government led by

Rajiv Gandhi gave MGR the “Bharat Ratna”, India’s highest civilian award, in 1988 after his death on December 24, 1987. Despite MGR’s support for the unpopular Accord, Jaffna Tamils continued to adore MGR both as an actor and as a sincere political friend. The Tamil areas in the North Sri Lanka are dotted with MGR statues. It is this figure and atmosphere that is the kernel of Allaipiddy culture in the inner narrative.

Set in the period of MGR’s popularity, the story captures these distinctive characteristics of MGR films and his cult following. While the narrator and his friends are adolescent boys carried away by the MGR aura, Parimalakanthan was thirty years old and the biggest follower of MGR. Like his idol, Parimalakanthan also tried to live his ideals through his plays. The narrator comments how Parimalakanthan would create roles for anyone who wished to perform. The fans of MGR also create a public library called “Makkal Thilagam MGR community Centre” and later called “Ponmala Semmal Parimalakanthan”. This cultural environment is remembered by the first person narrator in Paris. In the present of the narrative this memory becomes the narrator’s cultural memory.

Assmann in “Canon and Archive” differentiates between types of remembering and forgetting of Cultural Memory. She differentiates between “active and passive remembering and forgetting”. In the case of remembering she identifies them as “Active and Passive Memory”. She states that “the institutions of active memory preserve the past as present while the institutions of passive memory preserve the past as past. The tension between the pastness of the past and its presence, is an important key to understanding the dynamics of cultural memory” (98). This tension between the two types of remembering is central to the inner narrative. For the narrator this cultural memory is a passive memory. This passively stored memory that preserves the past as past can be identified as the “archive” (Assmann 99). As Assmann comments time has outdated the narrator’s archive. Once they are outdated, this cultural memory loses its cultural function and relevance, transforming it into a heap of (possibly compromising) rubbish. However like passive memories this cultural memory of Allaipiddy does not completely disappear and enters into a new context when Donas is interrogated in Paris about his associations with the Movement. This historical archive is a holder for memories that have fallen out of their framing institutions within Sri Lanka because of the ethnic violence against the Tamils and the war. However the narrator remembers it and hence reframes and interprets it in the new context of exile. As part of the passive dimension of cultural memory, however, this knowledge that is accumulated in the archive is static. It is stored and potentially available, but it is not interpreted, till Donas makes the narrator remember and recall this memory. This archival memory of the narrator, therefore, can be described as a space that is situated on the boundary between forgetting and remembering; its materials are conserved in a condition of latency, in a space of intermediary storage. Thus, the narrator’s archive “is part of cultural memory in the passive dimension of preservation” (Assmann 103). It stores materials in the intermediary state of “no longer” and “not yet,” deprived of their old existence and waiting for a new one (Assmann 103).

Parimalakanthan idolises and preserves the cultural ethos that symbolises MGR in Allaipiddy, through accumulating posters, song books, repeating dialogue and body postures of the icon. However once the Movement comes to Allaipiddy, this culture is gradually eroded. In 1987, when MGR dies, Parimalakanthan chooses to actively remember this cultural capital of MGR. He decides to preserve the past of MGR as present. To this effect he dons, like MGR, the famous white cap and sports the dark glasses, that MGR was always seen wearing during his political career. Parimalakanthan acquires the nickname “MGR”. The active dimension of Parimalakanthan’s cultural memory supports a collective identity, which refuses to be eroded by the civil war. This memory “is built on a small number of normative and formative texts, places, persons, artefacts, and myths which are meant to be actively circulated and communicated in ever-new presentations and performances” (Assmann 103). The working memory of Parimalakanthan stores and reproduces the cultural capital of his society through the wearing of the cap and the glasses and is continuously recycled and re-affirmed. Parimalakanthan thus canonises MGR by actively remembering and reliving as “MGR”. But this active memory of Parimalakanthan is no longer the active cultural memory of his community. As the



war rages on, generations that had “canonised” MGR leave Allaipiddy in fear of Sinhala domination or to join the Movement. “Elements of the canon are marked by three qualities: selection, value, and duration” (Assmann 103). This canonical memory of Parimalakanthan loses all the three qualities once the ethnic violence and guerrilla groups’ internecine wars begin. Culture and daily lives lose their value and cannot endure war. Hence this “active memory of Parimalakanthan” does not have a lasting place in the cultural working memory of a society.

It is into such a society that Donas is born. Assmann comments that “when thinking about memory, we must start with forgetting” (98). The dynamics of personal memory consists in a continuous interfacing between remembering and forgetting. In order to remember some things, other things must be forgotten. Increasingly in the context of war; one’s memory is highly selective. Memory capacity is restricted by neural and cultural restraints such as focus and bias. On the level of cultural memory, there is a similar dynamic at work. It is also limited by psychological pressures, with the effect that painful or contrasting memories are concealed, evacuated, overwritten, and possibly obliterated. Born and brought up within the space of the civil war, where war is a part of the everyday, for Donas and his contemporaries, the cultural memory of their previous generation, is irretrievably lost. In the communication of war, identity, and politics much must be continuously forgotten to make place for new information, new challenges, and new ideas to face the present and future. Donas represents that continuous process of forgetting which part of his social normality, becomes. Assmann differentiates between “active and passive forgetting”. By active forgetting she means, intentional acts” such as trashing and destroying” (98). She also comments how this memory can become “violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority”. While the macrocosmic war attempts this forgetting, the microcosm of Donas’ world passively forgets this cultural memory. Though the text does not directly refer to the historical ban by Sirimao Bandaranaike on Tamil movies, one can allude to this considering Donas grows up in a world where he has no idea who is “MGR”. However, Donas’ loss of this memory can be seen as “passive form of cultural forgetting” (Assmann 98). Assmann defines it as “related to non-intentional acts such as losing, hiding, dispersing, neglecting, abandoning, or leaving something behind” (98). In Donas’ case the cultural memory is not materially destroyed - though at a certain point in the story the Movement wants to use the library for its meetings etc- it conversely does not get destroyed. But MGR and the cultural ethos fall out of the frames of awareness, evaluation and utility for Donas and his generation. Assmann comments that what is lost but not “materially destroyed may be discovered by accident at a later time in obscure locations”. Donas no doubt materially discovers MGR in the movies he watches in Paris to understand the real MGR. But before he discovers the real “MGR” the defunct information from a not very distant past, diverges an important return path from cultural forgetting to cultural memory. Having neglected, disregarded cultural relics of the previous generation - consciously or unconsciously Donas is a victim of passive forgetting and the consequential trauma in the context of war. Donas’ limited or negligible cultural inheritance leads to the dark irony in the story. Donas is an EPRLF member the rival group of the LTTE. As stated above, MGR was strong supporter of the LTTE. Donas who has passively forgotten the cultural memory of MGR, of the previous generation has no clue about the real MGR, and mistakes the fan-mimic for the icon. Thus he concedes, in a supremely paradoxical situation, that he killed “MGR”- Parimalakanthan. Ironically, he kills the one man who has tried to keep this memory “active”. To Donas, MGR is the powerful magnate behind the LTTE, hence “MGR” must die and frames “MGR’S” suicide.

Shobasakthi is the critical insider to the trauma and memory of the Eelam wars. His complex identity as a minority, island Tamil who was also a child soldier is reflected in his works which show how trauma is multicontextual and a consequence of political ideologies, oppressive decolonized state and so on. “The MGR Murder Trial” narrates cultural trauma that ensues when cultural is lost or forgotten. Trauma and memory in “The MGR Murder Trial” are embedded and intertwined. In the story trauma is invisible and suppressed because it has been erased. There are no literal wounds in the story because these wounds are metaphorically writ on the cultural psyche of the minority community. For Shobasakthi this memory is lost forever as it is intrinsically a Tamil memory. The trauma of the story lies in the psyche of the first person narrator who knows that an entire generation is not aware of a culture which was fundamental to his generation. For Donas’ generations there is only one memory

-the war. This has erased everything else. The loss of a cultural memory is the cultural trauma of Donas' generation of Tamils and perhaps future generations too. As a person who has undergone the trauma of the war, Shobasakthi deals with the simultaneous need to narrate the trauma and hence memorialize it, and the inevitable silence that confounds him when this trauma has to be narrated. Narrating the trauma is to re-live the trauma and remember complex memories that in turn wound the already fragmented psyche.

While the paper focuses primarily on Shobasakthi's story, it would also contrast the use of cultural memory to narrate the war by other writers from Sri Lanka. Mainstream Sinhala history primarily resorted to a myth memory chronicled in *The Mahavamsa*. The *Mahavamsa* (Great Chronicle), written around the Fifth Century was then updated in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries to explain Buddhism's ascendance and preeminence in Sri Lanka. According to this text Prince Vijaya and 700 followers exiled from his father's Kingdom, land of the Vangas (located somewhere in North India) landed on the island in 500BC. Vijaya was the son of Sinhabahu (who was born of a lion and the abducted daughter of King of Vanga) and his sister Sinhasivali. Though rooted in bestiality, incest and patricide, the myth is primordial to the Sinhalese ethnic polity, in that it facilitates Vijaya's progeny to call themselves 'people of the lion'. It also partly explains the sword carrying lion in the national flag, which many minorities of the state disregard as it represents a hegemonic Sinhala symbol. The text also suggests that the island was destined to be a repository of Theravada Buddhism and hence the widely held belief that the country is 'Sihadipa' (the island of the Sinhalese) and 'Dhammadipa' (the island that preserves Buddhism). This belief is mainly influenced by the claim that Buddha died on the day Vijaya arrived and the Buddha arrived thrice on the island – to consecrate the island as a sanctuary for Buddhism. Though Vijaya's second marriage is to a princess from Madurai, the myth does not emphasize that the Tamils were not only kinfolk but also cofounders of the people of the land. De Votta comments that this myth is taught in schools and most children think it indisputable history. However De Votta remarks the myth most baneful to interethnic harmony in the text is the Duthagamini myth who fought and killed the Chola king Elara. Buddhist nationalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have emphasized the ethnicities of these two kings to claim that the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is at least two millennia old. Further it demonizes non-Sinhalese and legitimizes war as just if waged to propagate the Dhamma and protect Buddhism. These two myths of the collective memory of the Sinhalese are central to the Sinhalese racial consciousness and their claims as the true sons of the soil 'Buddhaputras' and the kings as protectors and fosterers of Buddhism. Many people on both sides adhere to this belief, which has been challenged by anthropologists. The Sinhalese writer Kamala Wijeratne is not a poet by profession—she is a teacher of English, who self-published her first collection of poems in 1984, in the after effects of the 1983 insurrections. While it is true that Wijeratne's work has developed significantly due to the conflict and she draws attention to the trauma of war, there is also a Sinhalese nationalistic strain in her work. In her poems, Wijeratne invokes this collective memory of the Sinhalese recorded in *The Mahavamsa*. The collective memory is resorted to subtly and overtly in poems like "I Will Not Forget Dutugemunu," from her 1984 collection *The Smell of Araliya Flowers*, where she compares the Tamil King Elara to Macbeth. Jayasuriya remarks that the speaker continues to place blame on the Tamils with references to "Macbeth's gory glass in your hands" (21) and "Elara's marauding bands" (22). She also observes that since Macbeth and Elara both sought thrones that were not rightfully theirs, the speaker's emphasis is on Tamils as invaders of Sri Lanka, who have long attempted to usurp the rightful position of the Sinhalese in the land, very much in keeping with the Sinhalese nationalist viewpoint. In "We" (from *Millennium Poems*), the speaker sees the Sinhalese as the rightful heirs of the country—Sri Lanka is depicted as a Buddhist country set aside for the Sinhalese, who are symbolized by the lion. "There was no doubt at all / About status / We were the children / Of the lion / Basking in the sun; / Singled out to inhabit / The golden isle / And rule it too / For five thousand years" (1- 9). The speaker poses a question: "Has the decline come then? / The tide turned, the tail twisted? / The tiger growls in the jungle terrain" (22-24). Jayasuriya comments that the threatening growl of the tiger is a very obvious reference to the activities of the LTTE, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, commonly known as "the Tigers." The speaker admits that in more recent centuries, there have been additions to the land from India, Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Arab nations —

obviously referring to the Tamil, Burgher, and Muslim minorities in Sri Lanka. Jayasuriya adds that there is a definite sense that these newcomers should not attempt to usurp the power of the dominant lion. "May the genetic mixing make / The lion stronger" (49-50). The lion here could represent Sri Lankans as a whole since it is the main symbol on the Sri Lankan flag. The lion symbol has too often, however, been associated *only* with the Sinhalese; this is the reason why green and orange strips were added to the Sri Lankan flag to represent the minorities who felt that they were excluded by the image of the lion at the center.

Wijeratne might not be pluralistic in her location but she writes from a vaguely-divided guilt, of being a part of the Sinhala majority during a civil war which is grounded on ethnic identity politics. However unlike Shobasakthi she has not experienced the trauma first hand. Therefore in her vacillation between guilt and majoritarian ideology, she reflects a collective memory and trauma. This nevertheless, unlike Shobasakthi, does not stem from her personal memory. Hence she is not the critical insider. Not having the access to personal memory or trauma, Wijeratne therefore resorts to majoritarian myth - memories and trauma. Through this sort of a "spiritus mundi" she believes the Tamil "beast is slouching" towards culture capitals to unleash terror and chaos. Shobasakthi, on the other hand, brings together things remembered and things tabooed and what are commonly marginalized versions of memory. By giving voice to those previously silenced traumatic memories, they constitute an imaginative counter-memory, thereby challenging the hegemonic memory culture and questioning the socially established boundary between remembering and forgetting. Through a multi-perspectival expansion of the remembered world, the narrative designs a panorama of co-existing collective memories. Neumann observes that not only are these shared interpretations of the past by a group, but also the incompatible memories of the shared collective past, become visible (338).

## References

1. Assmann, Aleida "Canon and Archive" Studies, Cultural Memory" An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook." *Media and Cultural Memory* (2008)(98-107)
2. --- "Memory, Individual and Collective" *The Oxford Handbooks of Political Science*. Ed Robert .E. Goodin. Oxford: OUP, 2006
3. Assmann, Jan and John Czaplicka "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity". *New German Critique* 65(1995) 125-133
4. De Silva, K.M. *A History of Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2003. Print.
5. De Volta, Neil *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* California: Stanford University Press, 2004. Print.
6. Erll, Astril "Cultural Memory Studies: an Introduction" An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook." *Media and Cultural Memory* (2008)(1-15)
7. Hardgrave, Robert L. "Politics and the Film in Tamilnadu: The Stars and the DMK." *Asian Survey* 13.3 (1973): 288-305.
8. Hardgrave Jr, Robert L., and Anthony C. Neidhart. "Films and political consciousness in Tamil Nadu." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1975): 27-35.
9. Jayasuriya, Maryse *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature 1983-2009* Plymouth: Lexington House, 2012. Print
10. Neumann, Birgit . "The Literary Representation of Memory" Studies, Cultural Memory. "An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook." *Media and Cultural Memory* (2008)(98-107)
11. Richardson, John. *Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism and Development from Sri Lanka's Civil War*. Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005. Print.
12. Shobasakthi . . "The MGR Murder Trial" *The MGR Murder Trial* trans. Anushiya Ramaswamy Gurgaon:Penguin,2014. Print
13. Stokke, Kristian and Anne Kirsti Ryntveit."The Struggle for Tamil Eelam".*Growth and Change* 31.2(2000) 285-304. Print.



14. University Teachers for Human Rights. "The Growth of Tamil Militancy" *The Broken Palmyra: The Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka-A Report* Jaffna, 2014. (Pars5.1-5.5). Web.
15. ---, "Missed Opportunities and the Loss of Democracy" *The Broken Palmyra: The Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka-A Report* Jaffna, 2014. (Pars 1.1-1.3).Web.
16. ---, "Some Milestones in the Development of Tamil Political consciousness" *The Broken Palmyra: The Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka-A Report* Jaffna, 2014. (Pars 2.1-2.3).Web.
17. Wijeratne, Kamala. *The Smell of Araliya Flowers*. Maharagama,: Janaka, 1999. Print.
18. ... "We." *Millennium Poems* 7-8. Kandy: Digital Teleprints, 2002.Print.