

EXTERNAL COMPULSIONS OF SRI LANKA'S HISTORY

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Abstract

The subject matter of this research spans from the earliest times since independence. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines that History is often perceived as a mosaic of discrete occurrences. Sri Lanka's historical mosaic has evolved as a result of internal and external events that have taken place over the years. As an island, Sri Lanka's relationship with the global community in land and sea domains have been particularly important in the evolution of Sri Lanka's historical narrative. On the other hand, a key turning point such as King Vijaya's arrival in Sri Lanka has mainly taken place due to Sri Lanka's close proximity to India. Therefore, the factor -strategic location and the close proximity to the Indian sub-continent- played a significant role in shaping Sri Lanka's historical record. Historically Mahawamsa portrays Vijaya as the first king to establish civilized rule in Sri Lanka. Then rule of King Dewanampiyatissa stands out due to advent of Buddhism during his reign. These events took place due to the fact that India is separated only by a narrow strait. Sri Lanka has been invaded by South Indians at various times due to the same fact. It is almost the same as the French regularly invading England and vice versa. Invasions -whether for trade or for territory- have also changed the political, economic and social environment in Sri Lanka. Due to the favourable geographic location -being situated in the hub of sea lanes in the Indian Ocean- later in 1505, the Portuguese landed in Sri Lanka purely by chance. Subsequently Dutch and the British followed the Portuguese. This paper is an attempt at interpreting Sri Lanka's major historical events through the lens of international relations.

Key words: Sri Lanka. International Relations, Proximity, Strategic Location

INTRODUCTION

The history of Sri Lanka is intertwined with the history of the wider Indian subcontinent and surrounding areas, including South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka, being an island located in the Indian Ocean, has been influenced by several alien encounters. The authors intend to discuss the main theme under the following areas to argue that Sri Lanka's history is significantly impacted by international relations.

- ❖ Arrival of Vijaya
- ❖ Advent of Buddhism
- ❖ South Indian Invasions
- ❖ Shifting of Kingdoms
- ❖ Colonial Encounters

EARLY PERIOD

Sri Lanka's relations with the external world around it -both by land and by sea- has been particularly important in its historical evolution. How historians have looked at what we may call these 'external factors' raises important issues of approach, orientation and perspective in historical studies. The geography of the country too bears an impact on the history of the country. This factor is often proved in the history of the island state. The external factors which influenced the early history of Sri Lanka could be discussed in two areas.

1. Sri Lanka's proximity to India.
2. Sri Lanka's strategic location in the sea trade route.

According to chronicles and legends, king Vijaya is considered the first king of Sri Lanka. The earliest record of Vijaya's legend is found in the Dipawamsa, written around the fourth or the fifth century. Vijaya and seven hundred of his followers were put on a ship and banished from Lata Rata, North India. They embarked from the port of Supparak and landed in Lanka on the day of the Buddha's demise. After ruling for several years since King Vijaya had no heir to the throne, he was told to call his brother, Price Sumitta, to succeed him at the throne before his death. But at that time Price Sumitta was ruling Sinhapura. Because of that the youngest son of price Sumitta, prince Panduwasadewa was despatched to Sri Lanka to fulfill the task. As the third

wave of immigrants, Princess Bhaddakachchayana was brought from India after some time to be married to prince Panduwasadewa.

The Mahawamsa narrative portrays the arrival of Vijaya as the landmark of civilizing early Sri Lankan society. However, modern historians argue that civilizing of society could not have taken place overnight. According to Somadeva (2018) the development of the society and culture of Sri Lanka was a gradual phenomenon rather than an accelerated process. However, the important point to highlight here is that the arrival of Vijaya made a notable impact on the ongoing social, economic and cultural continuity of Sri Lanka. This event was merely a result of the close proximity of Sri Lanka to the Indian subcontinent.

ADVENT OF BUDDHISM

According to Mahawamsa the advent of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is the most important event that had taken place in Sri Lankan history. The main reason for introducing Buddhism to Sri Lanka was also the close proximity. As a result of that, Sri Lanka was under hegemonic pressure from India. The history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka begins in the third century BCE during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. One of the main reasons for introducing Buddhism to Sri Lanka was the friendly relationship between King Devanampiyatissa and Emperor Ashoka. There is no conclusive evidence to declare that Buddhism existed in Sri Lanka before the advent of Arahath Mahinda and the entourage. However, according to folk lore Lord Buddha is said to have visited Sri Lanka three times. That shows even before the Mahawamsa period, there existed some relationships with the Subcontinent.

It is recorded in Mahawamsa that a minister named Arittha was dispatched to Emperor Ashoka to obtain the guidance of female disciples to enable the women of Lanka to obtain ordination, For this purpose Sangamitta, the sister of Mahinda Thera who had entered the order and had received ordination, was sent out to Lanka at the request of the king and the people and on the recommendation of Mahinda Thera. Emperor Ashoka decided to send a southern branch of the Maha Bodhi to Sri Lanka along with Theri Sangamittha. King Devanampiyatissa created the Mahameuna garden to plant the Bodhi Plant and he also commenced the construction of the Pathamaka Chethiya, The Jambukola Vihara and the Hattahallaka – Vihara – and the refectory.

If Sri Lanka was located far away from India, Sri Lanka would not have been an Island heavily influenced by Buddhism. It is a universal truth that Buddhism plays a pivotal role in all Societal, Economic and Political spheres in Sri Lanka. Therefore, living next door to India has drastically shaped the identity of Sri Lanka as an island nation.

As a result of Sri Lanka's proximity to India, Sri Lanka was subjected to Indian hegemonic influences whenever the political power of Sri Lanka declined. Sri Lankan kings have also made matrimonial alliances for the purpose of securing political stability. Prince Vijaya fetched a princess from Madurapura while King Vijayabahu I, queen Lilavati and King Parakramabahu II also brought virgins to their sons from Jampudveepa or present-day India. Some kings employed Indian officials for administrative services. It is recorded in the chronicles that under queen Anula, an ancestor named Niliya and a city carpenter named Vatuka worked. The Artshastra written by Indian strategist Kautilya was used by the Sri Lankan kings.

SOUTH INDIAN INVASIONS

Sena and Guttika, the earliest South Indians who occupied the throne of Anuradhapura in the third century B.C, were sons of a horse dealer and it is likely that they were supported by commercial communities in South India. It is also possible that Elara who ruled Anuradhapura a few decades later would have had commercial interests. South Indian literary works refer to a naval pilot named Elela Singham who belonged to a royal family. It may be that Elara of the Sinhala chronicles is the same person as Elela Singham of the South Indian tradition.

The relationship between south India and Sri Lanka has existed from ancient times. During the period of the imperial Cholas, the influence of south India was felt in Sri Lanka. When the chola dynasty formed an empire, Sri Lankan kings had maintained contact with Cheras and Pandyan against Cholas.

SOUTH INDIAN MAP – 12TH CENTURY

Sri Lanka had closer contact with Tamil Nadu than with the other parts of the South India because Tamil Nadu is situated near by Sri Lanka. According to recorded history, during the past 2500 years, Sri Lanka was invaded seventeen times by Tamil speaking Dravidians from Southern India. These brutal Tamil armies and the merciless mercenaries disrupted the continuity of the Sinhala kingdom. As a result, the

traditional kingdom of Rajarata was shifted to the South West with the passage of time.

From time to time, Tamil invaders held sway over the Island for 170 years. The threat of Tamil invasions was especially critical during the 5th and 6th centuries AD. This was the time when Tamil ethnic and religious domain was consolidating in Southern India. Three Hindu or the southern empires from dynasties known as “Pandaya, Pallava and Chola” were becoming bold and confident to pose a threat to Sri Lanka. To make matters worse for our country, the influence of Buddhism in India has faded away at this period since Buddhism was repressed by the Hindu monarchs. The above kingdoms -Chola, Pandaya and Pallava- carried out repeated invasions and posed a grave threat to Sri Lanka. Although some of these South Indian kings were able to usurp the seat of Sinhalese power only for a limited period, eventually they were ousted, and the country was unified under the rule of Sinhala Buddhist monarchy again.

According to recorded history, frequent threats by powerful South Indian states to the stability and to the security of our country, continued over during the past 2500 years. The first reported account of south Indian Tamil and rule in Sri Lanka was during the period of 237 – 215 BC by two brothers named Sena and Guththika, who were horse dealers. They have been killed by the Sinhala king Asela who ruled the Anuradhapura kingdom. Then again, after 10 years a well-known Chola invader called “Elara” ousted king Asela and ruled Rajarata for forty-four years. The king Elara was defeated by the great Buddhist warrior, king “Dutugamunu” and the country was ruled in a peaceful manner.

During the time of King Valagamba (89-77 BC) South Indians invaded Sri Lanka with Seven Tamil warriors and King Valagamba was banished from his kingdom. They were Pulahatta, Bahiya, Panaya Mara, Pilayamara, Dathika and two others who went to India with the relics of the Lord Buddha. Subsequent to this event, Sri Lanka’s kings seem to have sought the assistance of Pandayans in order to expel Chola invaders from Sri Lanka.

Holding sway over the Sinhala kingdom, the Pandayan’s invaded the island in 833 BC to rule the country for 24 years. After the invasion of Pandayan’s, Chola invaders tried to become stronger and more effective. From this point onwards both Cholas and Pandayans developed an interest over the royal seat in Sri Lanka.

King Parantaka I of the Chola Empire led an invasion and conquered with his allies. When King Paranthaka conquered Madurai, the defeated ruler took the royal ammunition of Madurai and handed it over to King Dappula IV, who ruled Lakdiva. As a result, King Parantaka I invaded Lanka to take over the Maduravi kings and took away the royal goods. It was the first invasion of Ceylon by the Cholas. King Raja I invaded Anuradhapura in the nineteenth century BC. At that time Raja was the fifth Mihindu king. King Mahinda had fled to Malaya during the invasion, and King Raja I had plundered the Lakdiva resources and returned to India. Later, in 1017 AD, Rajendra Chola I, son of King Raja I, invaded and captured Rajarata. They called Rajarata Mummudichola Mandalam. Later, in the year 1070 AD, King Vijayabahu I liberated the country from the Cholas and united Lanka.

During the reign of Queen Leelawathi, who was the widow of King Parakramabahu the first, Polonnaruwa was invaded by a Pandayan Tamil invader. He was responsible in deposing her and ruled for three years. This was the first invasion to take place in the Polonnaruwa kingdom, but the most crucial invasion was carried out by ruthless Kalinga Maga who landed in Karainagar in 1215 AD, at the head of an army of 24,000 along with Kerala and Tamil warriors. They marched straight towards Polonnaruwa and defeated the ruling King Parakramabahu the 2nd and ruled for 21 years. The thirst for blood and the atrocities of invaders were unprecedented in the living memory of the country.

Kalinga Maga dominated over the inhabitants of Raja Rata and extended his invasion to the south of the country but was compelled to retreat. Being beaten by the forces of Vijayabahu the 3rd of 'Maya Rata', Maga was killed by the Sinhalese while he was retreating to India. This insecurity brought about by the invaders was the main reason for the relocation of capitals.

During the invasion of Magha the country was ravaged, plundered of its wealth and much destruction was caused to sacred monuments of the country. The 700-year-old Sinhala royal place in the citadel of Anuradhapura was burnt down. Relic chambers of stupas were ripped open and valuables including gold images in shrines were carted away. Often after plundering the treasure, they razed to the ground, these historic structures for good.

STRATEGIC LOCATION

Sri Lanka is connected by sea routes with ports in the southern, western and north-eastern regions of India. It was conveniently linked with the sub-continent as well as with ports in the Arabian Sea, the Southeast Asian kingdoms and China. Several Sri Lankan ports played a crucial role in maritime trade that flourished through these sea-routes but the degree of importance of some of these ports varies from time to time. Prior to the thirteenth century, Mahatittha or the great port, opposite Mannar on the northwestern coast facing the Arabian sea was rated the key trading port of the Island. Mahatittha, located at the mouth of the Malvatu river, offered easy access to the capital -Anuradhapura- which was located along the banks of the same river. However, with the increased emphasis on the south-east Asian Sri Vijaya Kingdom as the main centre, the significance of Mahatittha had diminished to some extent. However, Mahatittha did not entirely lose its prominence in the period between the seventh and the twelfth centuries and it prospered as a bustling emporium where South Indian merchants flourished. In addition to ancient temple of Tiruketisvaram at Mahatittha, a temple named Rajarajavarattu Mahadeva was constructed near the port in the eleventh century by the Chola conqueror Rajaraja I to facilitate the religious observances of the trading communities and soldiers stationed there.



Figure 1: ancient Capitals and Ports

Source: History of Sri Lanka-W. I. Siriweera

In the Jaffna Peninsula, existed two notable ports namely Jambukolapattana and Uraturai. Jambukolapattana which could be identified with modern Sambiliturai is not recorded as a port of maritime commerce but was widely used as a port of embarkation and landing in Anuradhapura period. Its importance is testified by the fact that, there was a connecting high road from Jambukolapattana to the capital Anuradhapura. Although ports in the South are not mentioned such as those in the northern, north - western and eastern parts of the island in the early period of the Anuradhapura kingdom, one exception is the port of Godapavata (Godavaya) in the Hambantota district. In an inscription of Gajabahu I (114 – 136 A.D.) at Godavaya near the mouth of the Walawe Ganga, it is stated that customs duty charged at the port were dedicated to the Godapavata Vihara. The recent excavations suggest that Godavaya was a semi-urban centre endowed with an important port in international trade. These excavations disprove Nicholas's view that Godavaya was an unimportant port. As a notable harbour in the south, Galle had gained prominence at least by the middle of the fourteenth century. Ibn Batuta states that he journeyed from Dondra (Dinavur) to Galle (Quali) and that he was treated there by a resident Muslim named captain Ibrahim. The Chinese vessels that sailed through the Straits of Malacca victualled at Galle on the way to Malabar or the African Coast. The Galle Trilingual inscription dating back to the first few decades of the fifteenth century, written in Chinese, Persian and Tamil indicates that Chinese, Muslim and South Indian Hindu and Jain traders frequented the port. The fact that Galle had been a well-established commercial centre by the fifteenth century is also attested to by the Sandesa poems. It was a town with wide streets along which were located shops of all kinds.

The port of Valigama, had come into prominence at least from the twelfth century A.D. onwards. It is first mentioned as a port where affluent merchants dwelt during the reign of Parakramabahu I. The Kalyani inscriptions state that a ship sent by the Ramanna king to Sri Lanka arrived at Valigama. The Tisara, Parevi and Kokila "Sandesas" indicate that Valigama had become an important and prosperous port about the fifteenth century. It was predominantly settled by Muslims whose background and interests were entirely commercial. They spoke Tamil and sang Tamil songs.

With the shift of political centres to the South West and the development of the south-western parts of the island, several other ports such as Beruvala, Bentota, Vattala, Chilaw turned out to be of significance in channelling the island's foreign trade.

According to Parevi, Gira and Kahakurulu “Sandesas”, clusters of sailing ships could be observed regularly from vantage points of the western coast. In the fourteenth century, John De Marignolli arrived by the ship at the port of Perivills in Sri Lanka on his way to China. According to Henrey Yule, Perivills could be deduced being the port of Beruvala. Marignolli states that the administrator at Perivills was Coya Jahn, apparently the name of a Muslim chief. The “Sandesa” poems indicate the Beruvala was a Muslim trading center in the fifteenth century with many beautiful mansions and large shops.

Although an exact period cannot be determined, the Sinhalese established themselves in the island from about the first millennium B.C. There is no proof to substantiate the claim that the northern and eastern regions of the island were inhabited by Tamils from early stages of history. On the contrary, Jambukola Pattana -modern Sambiliturai- was an important port of the Sinhala kingdom and the Jaffna peninsula was within the territory of the Sinhala kings up to the thirteenth century A.D. except for very brief period. Besides Jambukola Pattana, Mahatittha opposite present Mannar in the north – west of the Dry Zone and Gokanna, modern Trincomalee in the east coast were among the principal ports of the Sinhala kingdom.

COLONIAL ERA

In the middle of the 13th century several European countries commenced navigation far beyond their shores and to explore new lands. For these pioneering explorers, even royal patronage was made available. When sailing into uncharted waters, these resolute sailors were immensely relieved to depend on the compass and the sextant. By plotting with these coupled with luck, the navigators were able to achieve their goals with the minimum loss of life.

PORTUGUESE

In the beginning of 16th century, in Sri Lanka there were three native centres of political power, the two Sinhalese kingdoms of Kotte and Kandy and the Tamil kingdom at Jaffna, Kotte being the principal seat of Sinhalese power. Kotte kingdom wielded the lion’s share of power in Sri Lanka at that time but none of these three kingdoms was endowed with the political and military clout to reunify the island.

In 1505 Don Lourenco de Almeida, son of Francisco de Almeida’s, was sailing to lure Moorish ships in southwest coast of Sri Lanka. But suddenly they had the misfortune to

face an unexpected situation as they were struck by a violent storm. Because of that storm, the fleet sought refuge at the Galle harbour. And that time king Parakramabahu the 8th (1484-1508) was ruling the Kotte kingdom. King Parakramabahu the 8th builds up a friendly relationship with Portuguese and he gifted cinnamon and elephants to Portuguese to take home. The king also granted them a concession to build a trading post in Colombo. But the Portuguese nurtured a different plan, while they were controlling the trade, they were plotting to wrest the control of whole country. The scenario was exactly what the British repeated in India- initially "trade not territory" but as they gained a foothold pursuing a policy consolidating "trade and territory".

During 15th and 16th centuries Arabian trader's and sefarer's dominance was patently evident across commercial sea lanes as well as along overland caravan routes. Because of their supremacy, the Portuguese were compelled to face another problem since they always wanted to retain the monopoly of trade routes and commerce. Meanwhile the Portuguese realized that the ideal location of Sri Lanka was crucial, if they wanted to attain mastery of the Indian Ocean. This location was conducive to all their future plans as explained above. Their main trading base was India and they wanted to protect their trade centres. So, they made use of Sri Lanka's natural harbours such as Mannar, Galle, Colombo and Trincomalee to protect their main trade centre from other competitors and attackers. Not only that, they found that Sri Lanka was rich in natural resources that they wanted. Being prompted mainly by these two reasons, they were keen to bring under their rule at least the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka.

As mentioned above, the division of Kotte kingdom resulted in a future division of an already divided island. Because of this fragmentation, the unity of people too suffered. The Portuguese used those events to gain the control of Sri Lanka mainly by stratagem, with the minimum of bloodshed at initial stages.

Portuguese wanted to enjoy the fruits in trading across Asia and to spread their religion – Catholicism and the commercial empire across the globe. They used Sri Lanka also to fulfil their needs. The division of Kotte kingdom prompted the Portuguese to interfere decisively in internal politics in Sri Lanka.

In order to repulse King Mayadunne, the monarch of Kotte sought the help of Portuguese. As a result of this move, Portuguese army became the security provider of the Kotte kingdom. Afterwards they openly engaged in politics and gradually

spread their tentacles in other fields too. This was a windfall to consolidate their foothold and to display their clout among the populace.

YAPANAYA KINGDOM (JAFFNA KINGDOM)

After the drifting of Rajarata civilization, Jaffna kingdom had risen up. Jaffna kingdom was ruled by Arya Chakrawarthy dynasty, and the King Pararayasekaram. They ruled Jaffna at the time when the Portuguese held sway in southern parts of Sri Lanka. In 1543 Jaffna king battled against Portuguese rule, but this ended up with the king submitting and agreeing to pay tribute. Both parties agreed that they should offer assistance to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in and around the kingdom, thus converting its inhabitants.

In 1560 Portuguese again invaded the Jaffna kingdom and after the Jaffna king Sankili left the kingdom. It was a victorious moment for the Portuguese, having captured the kingdom of Jaffna and having the opportunity to exercise power at port of Mannar too. Thus, a large territory in the north belonged to them and they had the chance to control the peripheral politics in both South and the North.

Again in 1638, under the Portuguese captain Diego de Mello the Portuguese attempted to invade the heartland of the Sinhala kingdom. But as usual all their efforts did not bear fruit against the strong Sinhalese battalions under the Sinhala kings. This was the last effort or the invasion to capture the Kandyan kingdom.

DUTCH IN SRI LANKA

The Dutch are the natives of Holland. After the discovery of maritime routes to Asia by Portuguese, the Dutch navigators too tried to reach the Asian destinations. In 1602, amalgamating some Dutch merchant groups they formed a commercial entity called "Dutch East Asian Company" which is commonly known as "VOC". From the beginning onwards their trade was transacted by "VOC" and their motive was "profit". From the above statement, and the evidence, we can derive that the Hollander's main motive was to reap profits by trading through the Asian countries.

The Dutch, as soon as they reached south Asia were based in "Batavia" from there, they controlled the trade in east Asian countries. They found out that Sri Lanka produced high quality pepper and cinnamon. Being tempted by spices, they formed a relationship with Sri Lanka driven by trade. This was the time that the country was facing a harsh rule under the Portuguese. Sri Lankan Sinhala kings wanted to build up

a fruitful relationship with the Dutch in order to oust the Portuguese from the Maritime Provinces. This suggestion was an ideal opportunity for the Dutch to be actively involved in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka.

In 1602, a Dutch ambassador named “Joris Van Splibergen” journeyed to Kandy and consulted the king Wimaladarmasuriya. After him a few embassies followed, one of whom was “Siebel de Vart”. But the discussions were not successful in 1658 AD. After the ascension of king Raja Singha the 2nd, he wanted to cement the bonds with the Dutch in order to expel the Portuguese from Sri Lanka and to reunite the country without being subdued by foreigners. From this conversation, they drew up with an agreement. This included:

- ❖ They agreed to help out Sinhala kings to drive out Portuguese from Sri Lanka.
- ❖ Military expenses should be set off by providing cinnamon, pepper, and other commodities.
- ❖ Export elephants. Dutch to retain the authority to decide the trade in Kandyan kingdom.
- ❖ Dutch enjoy the privilege to occupy the Portuguese forts if the king would agree to such a move.

From the year of 1638, the Sinhala kings spent nearly 20 years to oust Portuguese. During this period Sinhalese and Dutch joint forces succeeded in capturing Portuguese fortresses such as Trincomalee, Negombo, Galle, Kaluthara, Colombo, Mannar and Jaffna.

After capturing these fortresses, Dutch were not readily evacuating from these vantage points as was agreed upon by the pact. After these bitter incidents the relationship with kings and Dutch was strained, since Dutch did not honour some vital terms.

As mentioned above, King Raja Singha II's expectations of seeking the help of the Dutch were:

- ❖ Oust Portuguese from Sri Lanka.
- ❖ Reunite the country, by holding the areas which were ruled by Portuguese and proclaim the land again as a single country.

The king managed to fulfil his first aim, but bitterly disappointed with the second wish since the Dutch tend to occupy the Portuguese fortresses. In between the time period

of 1665 to 1668, The Dutch tend to attack the Kandyan territory and over run some places in Kandy.

SALIENT FEATURES OF POLICIES BETWEEN KANDYAN KINGDOM AND DUTCH

- ❖Initially Dutch avoided punitive expeditions against the Kandyan kingdom because they realized that they simply couldn't win those battles. They followed a policy of peaceful coexistence with Kandyan's because VOC wanted high profits in the long run.
- ❖To maintain a cordial relationship with the Kandyan kings, they sometimes dispatched delegations that were bearing exotic gifts European rarities. The ulterior motive was to achieve monopoly in cinnamon trade in Sri Lanka.
- ❖Dutch sponsorships for Buddhist revival and ordinations by providing ships.

BRITISH POWER ESTABLISHING IN SRI LANKA

Since 1607, British wanted to gain a foothold in the Indian subcontinent. They succeeded after about 10 years. Then they stationed factors and established several trading posts in East India. Their initial maxim was "Trade not territory" which was soon conveniently amended to "Trade and territory". The ultimate result was the inevitable "Territory and territory" which lasted until 1947. The British realized the importance of Sri Lanka along with her strategic location, as it was very close to India and in the midst of silk route. They foresaw that gaining the control of Sri Lanka would ensure their complete control i.e. free trading and unhindered navigation. Also, they sought a safe haven to repair and victual their ships which have faced enemy attacks or the ravages of high seas.

And also, one of their main reasons to come to Sri Lanka was the Trincomalee, as it was a massive natural harbour which afforded anchorage even to several fleets of ships. We could assume the other reasons as, the rich natural resources of Sri Lanka such as cinnamon, pepper, gems and tusks etc. which were in heavy demand in Europe. Being prompted by these reasons, soon they were eyeing the tempting fruits of the monopoly in Sri Lanka.

ESTABLISHING BRITISH POWER.

In 1796 "British East India Company" established their power in certain coastal areas in Sri Lanka. By February 1796, they had successfully conquered the Colombo, Galle,

fortresses. These victories were followed by seizing all the fortresses and territory which were under the Dutch. As the Dutch were smoothly relieving their hold on Sri Lanka as British were operating under certain developments and agreements that were emanating from the Holland. In 1802, coastal areas under British East India Company were duly transferred to the British sovereign and thereafter treated as a crown colony. The British mostly by employing intrigue and stratagem deposed the King Sri Wikrama Rajasinghe in 1815, thus gaining the control of the Kandyan kingdom too. They elevated themselves to become the rulers of the entire island within two decades of landing in this island.

From October 1798 onwards there were some changes made in ruling the coastal areas of Sri Lanka by British. This positive move was to appoint a governor who is loyal to the British crown. The first governor they appointed was Frederick North in order to regularize to the management and politics. From 1798 to 1802, the county was operating under the “dual control” system. Since this concept failed to bring about the desired result, the Company handed over the coastal areas of Sri Lanka to British government in 1802.

KANDYAN CONVENTION - 1815

Kandyan Convention is a very important official document which signifies that the Kandyan kingdom was officially ceded to the British Crown. Under this convention it was agreed upon to ensure that:

- ❖ The Kandyan kingdom no longer belongs to King Sri Wikrama Raja Singha or successors
- ❖ The Kandyan kingdom officially belongs to the British Crown.
- ❖ To protect cultural values and rights and responsibilities of aristocrats.
- ❖ To protect the main religion Buddhism, priests and their temples. Also, to developed and maintain it.

After signing this Convention, the country which flourished for more than 2,000 years purely as an independent state, was ruled under the tyrannous yoke of an alien power whose seat of government was located more than 8000 miles away.

CONCLUSION

By analysing all the facts above, it is evident that Sri Lanka co-existed with other countries while Sri Lanka's strategic location tempted other countries. It is clear that European powers were drawn to seize Sri Lanka due to her optimum geographical location and the abundance of natural resources. At other times the growth of the political, economic and social spheres in the country too contributed. Sri Lanka has at times been more influential and at times less influential to other countries over the decades. Through this research, the authors have shed light on Sri Lanka's relations with other countries, using essentials from the monarchy to the current political scenario.

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