

# Understanding of the Srilankan Tamil Migrants: A Diasporic Study with Reference to “*The Story of a Brief Marriage*” by Anuk Arudpragasam

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**Abstract:** Sri Lanka is a South Asian island located in the Indian Ocean. It gained its independence from Britain in 1948. The island witnessed the civil conflict between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamil communities since its independence. Tamils are known to be the most discriminated ethnic community in Sri Lanka and they report systematic discrimination in areas that include employment, University education and access to justice. The eruption of the civil war in Sri Lanka between the government and LTTE saw a mass migration of Sri Lankan Tamils to escape the hardships and bitter life of a country torn at war. This paper focuses on the understanding of the ethnic tensions that resulted in bloodshed and terror. This paper also includes a study of the Sri Lankan Tamil migrants to understand the causes for their dispersal and to analyze problems related to their living as diaspora across the globe. Hybridization is the outcome of displacement that occurred owing to the cultural blend through adaptation and assimilation. Immigrants experienced various problems in the displaced spaces and alien cultures and faiths that brought in novel notions and practices. Being away from home in the context of unfamiliar languages and traditions has caused complex trials and tribulations too. The present study aims at the analysis of the Diaspora and its side effects in the lives of the Tamil people as projected in the novel, *The story of a Brief Marriage* written by the Sri Lankan Tamil write, Anuk Arudpragasam.

**Key Words:** Sri Lanka, Sinhalese, Tamils, civil conflicts, ethnicity, LTTE, migration, globalization, diaspora

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Lankan Tamil migrants differ from the Sinhalese migrants. Tamil migrants who are numerically larger in groups, have experienced discrimination or alienation or perceived prosecution by the state that conditions and shapes their diasporic identities across the globe. Tamils are known to be the most

discriminated ethnic community in Sri Lanka. They report the violence in the history of a country, one comes across horribly destructive and disappointing facts and figures. For instance, the literary output of the people reveals the predicament exercised on the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Its history is dotted with violent and inhuman both torture and killings. The mass massacre marks the intensity of the political and ethnic violence. One of the finest novels, *The story of a Brief Marriage* written by Anuk Arudpragasam is analysed to understand the Tamil migrants in a diasporic perspective

## *Ethnicity, Self and Exile in Anuk Arudpragasam’s The story of a Brief Marriage*

A literary piece even records the historical upheavals and violence of any sort—political, social, ethnic or feministic. The Story of a Brief Marriage deals with two realities: ruins of the civil war and the plight of the Tamils and the atrocities of the Sri Lankan government. The two characters of Dinesh and Ganga represent the victims of the war. There are many antonyms like separation and marriage and life and death. Life for the protagonist has no meaning in the context of approaching death in the context of the destructive motives of the local people. He is always encountered with violence, sleepless nights and fasting days amidst the wounded. They have neither self nor identity; they are devoid of independent life.

Marriage of two strangers is celebrated when their lives are flanked by unexpected incidents and killings. Ethnic disparity is the only cause of all these beastly acts. The whole plot resembles a political and anti-cultural melodrama. The only living woman in the story is Ganga. Dinesh has no time to think of the physical needs of his wife. When he chances upon the time to gratify her desire, he fails to react owing to

penile dysfunction. The writer wants to convey the message that when man is suppressed and defected, he is devoid of the phallic functioning too.

The Story of a Brief Marriage is a nightmarish novel that frightens the readers with its severity in ruining ethnic revelry. The refugees were compelled to take shelter at places that were not theirs. The Diasporic perspective of the aftermath of the war is reflected well. The whole story takes place in flashbacks. It is a very good picturesque account of the displaced persons and the makeshift clinic that served the purpose of medical aid.

This novel really tells the helpless situation in Sri Lanka where there was the scarcity of doctors and nurses. Many of them had gone to attend to the patients at the area which was under the control of the government. On the contrary, the doctors who were present at the camp of the Tamils had no sufficient equipment like surgical instruments. Neither did they have anaesthetics. Amputation became very risky then. In a nutshell, the story is a window to the horrors of a war.

To give identity to his daughter, Ganga's father offers her to Dinesh. That shows the possibility of empathy and positive minded feeling, may it be for a short or brief time. Fatalism had overpowered the whole ambience even then he agrees to marry her as a token of contribution towards the people who need help in a fatal situation. He was surprised at the offer but later he thought that he was able to do what he could. He shared and pacified the feelings of the people who belong to his society. He intended to give identity to someone who deserves it. It is a brave debut novel dotted with worries and distress of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

It draws inferences and conclusions along the thematic trajectories of location of self, family, love, loss, sexuality, hybrid qualities, travel, mobility, regional marginalization, identity crisis and ethnicity in exile as revealed in the novel. Hybridization is the outcome of displacement that occurred owing to the cultural blend through adaptation and assimilation. Immigrants experienced various problems in the displaced spaces and alien cultures and faiths that brought in novel notions and practices.

## CONCLUSION

Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora is largely a creation of ethnic intolerance that has been a reality in colonial and postcolonial Sri Lanka and hence the narratives about such experiences of social and cultural exclusions are sagas that take the readers across decades and generations of characters. The select novel of *Anuk Arudpragasam* portrays the adverse factors that affected the life of the Tamil people especially during the Sri Lankan Civil War. The novels, short stories and other narratives of Anuk Arudpragasam, V.V. Ganeshanathan, Shyam Selvadurai, and Michael Ondaatje are most evidently such sagas that trace the history of ethnic and linguistic intolerance and the experiences of linguistic minority of Sri Lankan Tamils. Added to these vectors of experiences are those of genders, love, betrayal, marriage, sexuality and dislocation such narratives are essentially personal and political at once —exploring the psychological and subjective tenets of ethnicity at home and in Diaspora on one hand and the social and cultural (collective) dimensions of the same.

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