



RESEARCH PAPER

Ganeshanathan's *Brotherless Night*: A Fictive Site to Recount Evisceration of Human Rights During the Sri Lankan Civil War

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ABSTRACT

This paper closely reads V.V. Ganeshanathan's *Brotherless Night* (2023) as a fictive literary memorial site of twenty-six years long Sri Lankan Civil War. The paper draws its theoretical framework from Pramod K. Nayar's (2016) concept of Human Rights Literature (HRL). The paper, contextualizing the living conditions of Tamils in predominantly Sinhalese Buddhist Sri Lanka, brings to the fore the atrocious violation of basic civil and human rights of Sri Lankan Tamils. The study makes it obvious that the Sri Lankan Civil War observed the complex historical marginalization of Tamils through massive genocide, exclusion from national mainstream and abdication of rights to grow. The paper, putting the fictive character of Sashi, at the heart of the study, manifests the novel's agenda to explore turbulent history and precarious repercussions of Sri Lankan Civil War as the ugliest chapter of Sri Lankan national history.

KEYWORDS *Brotherless Night*, Human Rights Literature (HRL), Pramod K. Nayar, Sri Lankan Civil War, V.V. Ganeshanathan

Introduction

Fictive narratives serve to forge an alternative history of war brutalities when official state narratives are incomplete, biased and propaganda based. V.V. Ganeshanathan also establishes the supremacy of fictive narratives to expose the evisceration of basic human rights of Tamils during the Sri Lankan Civil War in *Brotherless Night*. Unfolding atrocious role of Sri Lankan state and army, the novel projects that how, in the wake of war, a family gets fractured losing some family members to death; suffers forced disappearances of brothers; the exile of the main character Sashi; and conversion of some members into terrorists. The title of the novel refers to the anguish and pain of losing brothers during the Sri Lankan Civil War, thereby metaphorically calling the war a long brotherless night. Choosing the first-person narration by focalizing on the character of Sashi, a Tamil girl of just sixteen years of age at the start of the novel, Ganeshanathan narrates the pains and miseries of being Tamil from the point of view of a female. The novel starts in early 1981, when Sashi is boiling water for tea that hot water slips onto her body. Hearing her shrieks K, her brother's friend, rushes into their home to apply eggs on her burnt skin and here an association develops between these two. Niranjan, the elder brother of Sashi is learning medicine in medical university of Peradeniya, Dayalan works in a local library, while her third brother Seelan is preparing exams to get admission in engineering, and her youngest brother Aran is just thirteen years old. Sashi and her brothers' friend K

are preparing for exams to get admission in medical university of Jaffna. Everyone is chasing his or her aspirations that the Tigers revolt against their marginalization and attack a politician in Jaffna. Suspecting K for the attack, policemen severely beat him. The Government ruthlessly sends Sinhalese police to Jaffna to fuel the fire and escalate the Civil War between ethnicities of Tamils and Sinhalese. Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) holds a political rally in which a Tiger's shot is fired at two policemen thus police, comprising of swarms of Sinhalese, destroys the local market, burns the library, lights up Tamil homes and four individuals are slain without any reason. Later on, Sashi, her brothers and K go to see the library to feel deep sorrow and remember their moments of studying there. K gets admission in medicine while Sashi cannot get the same due to poor performance in practical exams. She leaves for Colombo along with her brother to live at her grandmother Ammamah's house. Sashi befriends a Muslim girl Hasna while her brother Niranjan is engaged to his fellow, Malathy. Meanwhile, thirteen soldiers get killed in Jaffna by the Tigers thus initiating the Civil War. In response, Sinhalese attack Tamils in Colombo, killing Ammamah's neighbors and burning their house in Colombo. Riots pop up in Kotahena, Dehiwala, Borella and Maradana. Sashi's brother Niranjan, while trying to rescue Dr. Param's sister along with Rajendran, a taxi driver, is attacked by an extremist Sinhalese mob which burns the car killing Niranjan, Dr. Param and Rajendran. To save their lives, Sashi and her grandmother shift to a shelter and finally are sent to their house in Jaffna where unfolding of the news of Niranjan's death brings an emotional breakdown. To avenge the state and military, Tamil boys in Jaffna leaving their education, start recruiting themselves in militant groups, and get trainings in India. Dayalan, Seelan and K also disappear to join LTTE while some boys join EROS, PLOTE, and TELO. To prevent recruitment, military starts detaining innocent boys. Aran, Sashi's youngest brother, is also detained by army along with other boys from Jaffna. Here Mrs. Antonipillai, Mrs. Premachandran, and Mrs. Balakrishnan along with ten thousand females of Jaffna, lead Mothers' Front to pressurize the government to release innocent boys who are released a day later. Meanwhile, LTTE starts collecting money and food from public while K is ascended in Tigers' ranks. Whole Jaffna mourns Indira Gandhi's death. The guerilla war escalates between the Tigers and military. As the Tigers kill almost one hundred and fifty Sinhala settlers in Mid-December of 1984, the Sri Lankan army stops a bus of Tamil passengers and more than a third of the Jaffna bound Tamils are shot dead. K, a prominent Tiger by now, appears to tell Sashi that her Sir was killed by the Tigers. She criticizes the Tigers for their atrocious policies. Finally, Sashi gets admission in MBBS at the University of Jaffna where she meets Professor Anjali Premachandran and her husband Varathan who is also a Professor. Sashi starts working as a medic in a field hospital of the Tigers, at K's request, where she treats both the Tiger cadres and the civilians. Here, she once treats her brother Seelan who was attacked in warfare as a Tiger. Learning medicine in university and practicing in field hospital of the Tigers, Sashi's teacher Anjali motivates her to start writing history of her experiences in warfare. Meanwhile, Dayalan and Seelan try to recruit Aran in the movement, who largely criticized movement for killing innocent civilians. Aran shares with Sashi that Dayalan was part of an attack in which Aran's friend had been killed. After some days, while she was working in field hospital, K appears to tell Sashi that her brother Dayalan was killed due to shelling and the news brings another episode of mourning to family. As army starts aerial bombing in all directions, Aran builds a bunker in his house to provide shelter to his remaining family. Once, at night, Sashi narrowly escapes firing from a helicopter. After some days, K appears in Sashi's house and persuades them to leave this house so that the Tigers could live there. Sashi and her family shift in a new house. Anjali and Varathan start writing about the plight of Tamils in Reports published anonymously. In May 1987, in the wake of Operation Liberation, Lankan soldiers heavily bombard Jaffna. Innocent civilians take refuge in temples which are attacked by throwing barrels of human shit. Finally, through Indo-Lankan Accord, Indian

Peace Keeping Force (onward as IPKF) takes control of Jaffna which is largely protested by the Tigers and K decides to fast till death to pressurize government and IPKF for accepting their demands but K dies after fasting of twelve days. Thousands of Tamils join his funeral. Thus the Tigers win the common support against the government and IPKF. After that, Sashi joins Anjali and Varathan who are secretly writing a book on the human rights violations by army and LTTE. Due to violation of the accord, a blood bath starts between IPKF, army and LTTE, which largely hits the innocent Tamils. In October 1987, IPKF attacks hospital, killing eighty-seven individuals, and Sashi narrowly escapes death. Her family pressurizes her and her brother Aran to leave the country, and on the day of her departure, a bomb hits a building in Colombo by a suicide bomber who was a pregnant woman and Sashi remembers that she was the same girl who was raped by a soldier of IPKF and her four brothers were killed. Sashi returns to Anjali from the airport so that she could recount to her the anecdote of Priya's suicide bombing. Reaching Jaffna, it is unfolded to her that Anjali had been abducted and killed by LTTE for being accused of writing a book of Tamil experiences. Varathan publishes the final report and this time with his name and unfolds to public that Anjali was killed by LTTE. Sashi collects the book and finally leaves the country to reach London to meet her brother Aran. From there, she leaves for New York to hand over the book to some people who worked at the United Nations. She in New York, and Varathan, back in Sri Lanka write ten further such Reports till the end of the war in 2009. Sashi's parents shift to London while Seelan moves to New York and asks Sashi to persuade the UN to intervene and prevent his cadres from dying. By then, Sri Lankan security forces had successfully cornered the Tigers on a small strip of beach where 300,000 Tamil civilian were being used as a shield by the Tigers. Sashi meets Daniel, an official of the UN to convince him for demanding a humanitarian cease fire from Sri Lankan government, who says that he felt sorry because "it's not enough people," and no one was going to halt forces and the Tigers. The Sri Lankan soldiers fired from the front to the innocent Tamils while the Tigers fired from the back. In the first-person narration, Ganeshanathan addressed the reader through the character of Sashi that the book for which Anjali died, "you can find that book in your library. This is the one next to it on the shelf. I can promise you there will be another, and another."

Literature Review

Omar El Akkad's reading of the novel suggests that *Brotherless Night* is a genuine portrayal of "day to day life" of people stuck in terrorism and the story is associated "with real moments in a real war, real bloodshed". The story is about ugly human controversies which are brought by words like terrorism or terrorists or what does it mean to have an association with violence and the people who are behind it (*The New York Times*, January 1, 2023). Emily Rhodes maintains that *Brotherless Night* and *Love Marriage*, both novels of V.V. Ganeshanathan analyze "the lives of a Sri Lankan family torn apart by civil war." Politics of language is the forefront of the novel and its plot is comprehensively grounded in historical events like Mothers' Front protest in Jaffna and starring of a main character whose life is based on the activist Rajani Thiranagama. Furthermore, the novel focuses on "women in war" as "newly brotherless" and as "people who adopt a different stance to the male norm" (*The Spectator*, July 22, 2023). Eric A. Ponce also recognizes aspects of language and violence in the novel and holds that the novel challenges our assumptions and vocabulary. Ganeshanathan compels the reader to discard a binary description of the world in the favor of a complex, human one and along with the language, author spotlights on the violence in the war and rather than lamenting or justifying the evils of the war, she thinks that by focusing on the "good" and "bad" factions of the war we can learn why people fight and why it's important to stop the cycle (*Bookpage*, January, 2023). May-lee Chai establishes that the author of the novel builds interest of the reader in her propulsive second novel and her attention towards small anecdotes of caring, love and human

empathy moves the reader deeply. Thus, Chai considers *Brotherless Night* a masterpiece and celebrates it as an extraordinary and ground-breaking novel for both its “empathetic gaze and its clear-eyed depiction of the war brutality” (*Star Tribune*, December 30, 2022). Saloni Sharma reiterates the fact that *Brotherless Night* unfolds the political tension between different factions of the war, presents “histories of gendered trauma and resistance in war-ravaged cultures” and narrates, what can happen to an individual if ethnic identity becomes a source of their oppression and intended erasure. The novel is not preachy rather it develops attention to war brutalities, demands accountability and portrays real war events like movement of Mothers’ Front and real-life characters like Rajani Thiranagama (*Scroll.in*, August 19, 2023). Aditya Mani Jha’s review of the novel finds that *Brotherless Night* and the events it narrates were partially influenced by a non-fiction book called *The Broken Palmyra*, written by four academics of University of Jaffna, which was published in 1989. “You” is addressed to white readers, especially Americans, or for someone who is much like Sashi herself. And the brilliance of the novel lies in how smoothly it alters gear and permits Sashi to ripe emotionally (*Mintlounge*, April 29, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The paper partially borrows the similar design of the theoretical framework devised by Aamer Shaheen (2022) to analyze the Sri Lankan novelist Anuk Arudpragasam’s novel *The Story of a Brief Marriage* (pp. 94-97). The said theoretical framework adopted Pramod K. Nayar’s concept of Human Rights Literature (HRL) which is also utilized here in this paper to analyze *Brotherless Night* as a narration of the dark episode of Sri Lankan Civil War in order to record the historical national agony and violation of human rights.

Human Rights Literature

Nayar in his monograph: *Human Rights and Literature: Writing Rights* (2016) projects the significance of literary fictive narratives over other genres of literature because of their tendency to draw “models of the human, abhuman and the subhuman” (p. xi). Nayar argues that there are two ways that literary narratives usually adopt: narratives of human progress and growth and narratives of shattered, dehumanized and unprivileged subjects. The former kind of literary novels follow the trajectory of Bildungsroman and Sentimental novel while later kind of HRL adopts the literary mechanism of the genocide novel and the torture novel (pp. xii-xiii). Nayar, in his monograph, engages with more than a dozen fictive literary narratives and theorizes the specifics and features of latter kind of HRL by reading the specific novels in the sociopolitical contexts of factors like state supported suppression, manipulation, genocide and civil wars. In the upcoming pages, respective ideas of Nayar are discussed in consonance with our appropriation of V.V. Ganeshanathan’s novel as an exemplary sample of HRL in the sociopolitical milieu of Sri Lankan Civil War and the violence and suppression brought by it.

Nayar (2016) theorizes that HRL forecasts the “Unmade World” of “Unmade Subjects” by recounting those horrific contexts “in which subjects lose their subjectivity” and these scary sociopolitical contexts impose humiliation and deprivation, and by virtue of this victims of these contexts cannot maintain an “autonomous, coherent and agentic subjectivity” (p. 1). He establishes that “a genocidal imaginary” is a discursive exercise which provides justifications for the othering of ethnic groups and circles as “disposable subjects” and it results in genocide, massacre, ethnicides and civil wars (p. 3). Nayar believes that HRL has the potential of depicting “the dehumanization of individuals [...] made possible due to their emplacement in a condition of moral vacuums in systems and *discourses* of law and order, governance and social relations” (Italics in original, p. 11).

Now, it is of utmost importance to recognize that the sufferings, massacre and violation of basic civil human rights of Tamil civilians caught at the war front, as shown in *Brotherless Night*, is because of the moral vacuum and the genocidal imaginary caused by extremist Sinhalese exclusionist respective governments. Nayar uses the concept of “Endo-Colonialism” when a state declared its citizens as “threats to the nation” and eventually it applies violence in the form of “purges, rapes, disappearances, mass incarcerations and executions” (p. 25). And this level of suppression, violence and massacre is also exhibited by state and Tamil Tigers as shown by V.V. Ganeshanathan.

Nayar, by building his observations on the thoughts of Kelly Oliver, reiterates that HRL, “through the form of testimonial storytelling” and establishment of fictive witnesses, produces the information and also visualizes the shattered and dehumanized subjectivities situated in the horrific situations. HRL presents the objects like victim bodies as “melancholy objects” and it helps them to gain their political subject-hood (p. 74). These melancholy objects are considered as “memorialized objects of mourning” (Nayar quoting Margaret Gibson, p. 84) because they “position the individuals as citizens of a landscape of memories” (p. 91). He recognizes that HRL incorporates “storytelling and the recall of traumatic memories [...] for reconciliation and forgiveness, for a different understanding of the history and for different imaginings of the nation” (p. 92). And it is the way; a reader can become a witness of the horrific national history.

The novels belonging to HRL fictionally visualize “ethnic cleansing, genocidal violence and massacres” and along with it, unfolding of human life to death in these fictive narratives depicts social suffering. Controlling powers or governments make usage of state apparatuses in different ways to subjugate or dehumanize public in specific areas, like “everyday life lived in constant sniper fire [...] deliberate exposure of entire groups of people to inclement weather and denial of food and water [...] raids and random arrests [...] starvation and inadequate safety [...] and] horrific working conditions” (pp. 109-110). Nayar uses Foucault’s term “Heterotopias” to name these places where such social and national oppressions are exerted. According to him, in these “Heterotopias” offensive system and state forces carry their “extra-legal procedures” and declare respective citizens or subjects of these societies as “subversives, threats, dissidents or terrorists” and it allows the state to “inflict grievous harm upon them” (p. 124). Nayar maintains that in the absence of the factual state narratives for the dehumanized subjects, fictive narratives serve as tangible discursive memorial sites for the “inconsolable mourning” to the larger social pain as a “reminder and reminder of a troubled past” (p. 128). HRL challenges the officially declared regimes of memory and serves as “a counter-public” to recover the historical loss of the truth (p. 143). Thus, in the light of these insights, the paper at hand analyzes V.V. Ganeshanathan’s novel *Brotherless Night*.

Results and Discussion

A Fractured Family

Ganeshanathan, through her protagonist Sashi and first-person narrative focalized through her, presents a role of a witness to record the atrocious account of Sri Lankan Civil War which eviscerated innocent Tamils from their basic right of living. The novel serves as a memorial site to present the preposterous life routine of Tamils civilians who were caught between ranks of Tigers and Sri Lankan military forces. Plight of those individuals, who were suffering because of their status as an ethnic minority, resulted from the capricious policies of the state. Ranging from blood bath leading to massacre, deprivation from entering into national mainstream, rotten families, and collateral damage, were fruits of Sri Lankan Civil War which are largely discussed in *Brotherless*

Night, thus, the novel becomes a document of human rights violation and reader of the novel becomes a member to mourn the sufferings through what Nayar calls “heteropathic empathy” (p. 76) and accepts “a sense of obligation to remember what [... s/he] has seen” (Lauren Berlant quoted in Nayar, p. 78)

A family comprising of four brothers Niranjana, Dayalan, Seelan and Aran, one sister Sashi and their parents, got fractured in Sri Lankan Civil War which on a larger level, is story of each Tamil family living in Jaffna. Having high aspirations for their future, Niranjana was working as a doctor in hospital, while Seelan and Sashi, anticipated to get admission in engineering and medicine respectively. Sashi says: “I want to be like my grandfather,” while Seelan “spoke of bridges [and] the physics of keeping them aloft” (Ganeshanathan, 2023, pp. 16-17). Not only aspirations of siblings were high but, Sashi’s Appa wrote to her, “if you want to become a doctor [...] studying is now and always” (p. 21). Thus, each of the sibling was chasing his/her dreams and is stuck in a quest to rehabilitate their lives from the precarious reality of upcoming warfare, which is the basic human right promised by a state to its individuals. As Sashi’s father had “lived through his own brother disappearing” (p. 37), he wanted to secure their future in the wake of atrocious civil war. In her zealous effort to be a doctor, Sashi went with her brother to Colombo for preparing medical admission test and anticipated of falling “into a peaceful, happy routine with” her grandmother (p. 59). But this expectation is ruined when on the Black July of 1983, Dr. Niranjana along with his friend and taxi driver were attacked by a Sinhalese mob which “set the car on fire” while “three Tamil men” were “inside of it” (p. 84). This is first grief for Sashi’s family which brings a horrific break-down for family, destroying their family system as Sashi narrates: “the riots made a planet on which I did not wish to live, a planet without my brother” (p. 87). To avenge their brother’s death and fight for the Tamil cause, Dayalan and Seelan joined the LTTE without asking from their parents, while bringing dismay to the family as K unfolded to Sashi: “Dayalan has been killed” (p. 199), while Seelan continued to work for the Tigers.

The plight and miseries of Sashi’s family are manifestations of each and every family in Jaffna, where family systems witness a break-down and rusting because there stand no house which has not suffered death of its children, or forced conscription by the Tigers. While it is a basic right for Tamil community to live in their families and promote their family system, but unfortunately this family system is deteriorated at the hands of Sri Lankan security forces and Tamil Tigers and other terrorist groups. While “one brother” joins “to the LTTE and another to another acronym” (p. 95), their lives are stuck like pendulums to preposterous harsh realities of life. As Aran and his parents migrated to London, they also pressurized Sashi to leave the country so that their family chain, at least with their two remaining children, could grow. While Sashi continued to long for her lost brothers as she says: “I wanted to bring Niranjana back, to bring Dayalan back” (p. 325).

Collateral Damage and Infrastructural Loss

Infrastructure stands as a crucial element for the growth of a territorial population. It is a basic civil and human right of a population to flourish smoothly in the pragmatic progressive environment provided by the state. During the Sri Lankan Civil War the state not only cut the route of success for Tamil ethnic minority but also devastated the infrastructural sites and promoted the ruthless march of Sri Lankan forces against the struggles of Tamils. V.V Ganeshanathan (2023) categorically projects the complex discrimination of Tamil ethnic minority by highlighting civilians’ massacre along with the loss of infrastructure and collateral damage. LTTE, IPKF and military rushed without any heart for civil rights and destroyed the cities of Jaffna with heavy bombing, helicopters’ firing and shelling. At each page of the novel, a cruel account of forces is being unfolded

by focalizing on the character of Sashi, who moves from house to hostel and from hospital to field clinic and narrates the violation of basic civil and human rights. Nayar (2016) establishes that elements of witnessing and testimony in Human Rights Literature functions through “opposition between concealment and revelation, secreting and disclosing” as fictive narratives, to reveal the secrets, use contradictory imaginary to that of a political system or particular state (p. 81). They not only produce the knowledge but also work as “the novelized testimonies” to the “extreme socio-historical situations around the world” for example “colonialism [...] genocide and ethnocide [...] war [...] and totalitarianism” (p. 82).

Ranging from bombardment on the buildings to looting money from banks, Tamil ethnicity suffered each cruelty, as militants started recruiting people, so they looted banks. To prevent their jewelry from being robbed, Sashi’s Appa instructed her mother to pick up their jewelry from the bank as the Tigers were “stealing” (Ganeshanathan, 2023, p. 12). Not only Tamil civilians were deprived of their basic right of travelling on the bicycles but also to avenge murder of two policemen, police rushed toward Jaffna town “where they lit up the Tamil shops, houses, and other institutions” (p. 38). They “bombarded Jaffna market with heavy weapons that the dark scent of burnt wood clogged the air at Jaffna market” (p. 39). An ethnic minority, which was already suffering under the vicious cycle that excluded them from national mainstream, the Tamils observed a strong collateral damage and infrastructural loss which further eviscerated them from their right to flourish. Sashi recalls: “The Sinhalese Policemen burned our library last” and they had burnt “the elegant palace of white rooms where Seelan and K and I had studied” (p. 40). During the riots of Black July, “Tamil shops in Borella were burning”, along with major infrastructural loss in Jaffna, Dehiwala and Kotahena (p. 61). The house of Sashi’s grandmother was burned with fire and she witnessed scene of “the smell of the petrol and growing fire” (p. 71). Not only infrastructural damage was observed during the Sri Lankan Civil War, the war largely affected the procedures being carried out in respective buildings, like Sashi observes that “with the onset of violence, the University of Jaffna was given to stops and starts; it was hard time to begin” (p. 142) and due to unannounced load-shedding of electricity, students “stood under the streetlamps outside the Jaffna Teaching Hospital to study” (p. 204) and later on “the Tigers and the Indians have taken” the university (p. 274), thus a basic right of education was abused as a repercussion of the civil war. When the cruelties of the war risen to horizons, military started attacking houses as “the army launched cannon bombs from the Fort in all directions” and people needed “bunker(s) at home” as shelters and “bombed Jaffna spread out” as it was “heap of scattered cigarette” (pp. 213-214). Although, the government declared that it won’t attack temples so that people could take shelters in them, but still “they bombed Jaffna with barrels of human shit” and “even the holiest temples [...] became the foulest dump, smeared with waste” (p. 231). Thus, ranging from the hospitals to temples, from university to libraries, Tamil populations observed greatest violation of right to live and grow in smooth progressive environment. Sashi observes: “There are people in our country who would burn what we love and laugh at the flames (p. 43).

The cultural genocide against Tamil heritage must not be seen as something that happened in the past, as Sinhala Buddhist citizens destroyed Tamil statues as recently as 2020. These individuals are provided permission by the Sri Lankan government to commit acts of vandalism, destroy property, and kill Tamil people without consequence (Sriramrajan, 2020). As the repercussions of the civil war, Sri Lankan Tamils not only lost basic human right of living but they were largely prone to displacement and infrastructural loss, which further hammered their poverty and led to their discriminatory marginalization. A large territory of “Tamil lands are decimated, with poor infrastructure and fewer economic opportunities” (Francis, 2024). Losing homes, hospitals and

educational institute intensified the sorrows of being an ethnic minority in a Sinhalese Buddhist society.

A Discrimination against Tamil Ethnicity

In a utopian society, all humans are treated as equal respectful citizens. These societies transcend shackles of race, color, gender, class and ethnicity. But during the Sri Lankan Civil War it was taken as a crime to be a part of Tamil ethnicity. Ranging from a physical wound of a gun to an exclusion from national mainstream, Tamil individuals were largely discriminated by Sinhalese Buddhist ideology because of their language, culture, religion and ethnicity etc. While human rights are bestowed to humanity irrespective of ethnicity, the Sinhalese state of Sri Lanka treated Tamil ethnicity as a representation of sub-human or non-human population. Ganeshanathan's novel is the most timely and poignant fictional narrative that through its vivid portrayal of the plight of Tamil ethnicity, entrapped on the war front - a "Heterotopia" in the words of Nayar (2016), between the attacks of LTTE and military, stands as a witness to the state's indifference to inhuman circumstances faced by Tamils not only in Jaffna but in whole Sri Lanka. The novel does not support itself with "testimonial authority" (p. 79) through intra-textual or meta-textual details like geography of the areas affected by the war, rather it provides the real living conditions, being faced by Tamils.

Starting with the government "to promote their Buddha, their language, and their histories" (Ganeshanathan, 2023, p. 14) to indifferent behaviors of Sinhalese laymen during Black July when Niranjana called "some of colleagues" for shelter but they were "not picking up the call" (p. 65), Tamil ethnicity was isolated in their own country. Hasna, a Muslim girl narrates the insurrection of Sinhalese mobs to Sashi: "Sashi, in our neighbourhood, the houses that do not belong to Tamils are untouched. I can see the Tamil houses burning," because there were "persons to whom a curfew did not apply," (pp, 67-68) and it was evident that those mobs were backed by government. Not only government but public also turned against the innocent Tamils in Colombo and they "had voter rolls, to identify" Tamils "by ethnicity" (p. 74). In Colombo, Tamils were being looted by Tamils and "if you don't have the sovereigns, they would accept jewelry" (p. 131). As the violence rose between the factions of the war, "[t]he parties traded civilian massacres and the Tigers set fire to prominent buildings" (p. 223). The then-government officials were observed rallying rioters, and the army was either directly involved in the attacks or implicitly supported them as payback for the deaths of their 13 comrades (*Al-Jazeera*, 2023) In that very complex marginalization of Tamils which was initiated by many actors of the war, "sorrow took up residence in every street of every borough" (p. 258). Yet, Tamils were suffering from the hands of native militants and military, meanwhile IPKF entered Jaffna to intensify the pains by multiplying rapes and target killing of innocent civilians. Finally, when the end of the war drew near still it stood at the blood of innocent civilians as Sashi narrates: "The government is shelling although they know civilians are there, and the movement is holding people hostage" (p. 332). Innocent Tamils suffered till the last day of the war as, "the army shot them from the front" while "the Tigers shot them in the back" (p. 339). Tigers used "women citizens of the town to form a human shield in an effort to keep out the approaching Indian Army" (Venkatramani, 2013). Being a Tamil during the Sri Lanka Civil War brought the pains and sorrows and it seemed that being a part of Tamil ethnicity was a crime. From state to militants, from foreign IPKF to native Sinhalese, all played their role to brutalize massacre and a complex discrimination of Tamil ethnicity. During the war, all sides "committed countless rights abuses, including torture, extrajudicial killings, [and] attack on civilians" (Ganguly, 2023).

Mothers' Front; Mothers' Grief

Whenever the history of the Sri Lankan Civil War will be written the plight of Tamil mothers will be written as the most miserable pain of Tamil communities in Jaffna. Tamil mothers saw an unprecedented brutality as sometimes their sons were killed in front of their eyes, while on the other times the Tigers would abduct them for their forced conscription to LTTE, PLOTE, and other militant groups. As a result of the horrifying circumstances "in which subjects lose their subjectivity" and the oppressive sociopolitical contexts that impose deprivation and humiliation, Nayar (2016) theorizes that HRL foretells the "Unmade World" of "Unmade Subjects" because the victims of these contexts are unable to maintain an "autonomous, coherent and agentic subjectivity" (p. 1). In the same way, Tamil mothers and their sons lost control of their freedom, and they become miserable objects, and were treated as sub-humans by the Tigers and the military alike. Pressurizing boys to isolate them from their mothers stood as another account of violation of basic human rights of motherly love, which was directed towards Tamil sons and their mothers.

As soon as warfare intensified between factions of the war, "mothers with their ears like cats," (Ganeshanathan, 2023, p. 25) anticipated the loss of their loved ones. When Dayalan lost his bicycle, being suspect of attack on a politician in Jaffna town, he was depressed and Sashi's mother advised her to "love him harder in his disappointment, which is not his fault" (p. 28). As policemen attacked Jaffna to avenge murder of two policemen, mothers stopped their sons from riding bicycle. Sashi's mother also said "no" when her "brothers looked at the window" for going out (p. 40). Immediately after Black July, "the ranks of boys in Jaffna town were beginning to thin," thanks to enforced conscription by militants (p. 95). Now, it is to be noted that innocent boys were not only suffering on the hands of the Tigers but also by the military as Tharini, a friend of Sashi tells her that soldiers "beat" her brother "because they wanted to" and Tharini unfolds about her mother: "Every morning Amma looks like she wants to scream" (p. 109). Similarly, Aran, Sashi's youngest brother was detained by military twice. Sashi says: "every mother who took her son to the army," for the so called identification, "left her son with the army" as they detained them without any reason (p. 111). "Three hundred and sixty boys" were arrested by army and thus, their mothers organized the Mothers' Front in which mothers shared their sorrows, as they said "my son is a sportsman", "my boy is only thirteen" and one said, "my son just likes to read and draw" (p. 115). Mothers' Front was joined by "each devastated mother" as they struggled "to support the release of" their sons (p. 116). "Letting them spill their grief out," Chelvi listen to each mother with the patience as she has faced the pain of losing her own brother who "died at the Jaffna railway station during the riots" (p. 117).

Tamil mothers served as embodiment of endurance who not only survived the ruthless and wild attacks of militants and military but also continued to resist against the ongoing violence against their children. Tamil women, who had a very complex marginalization of gender, race, ethnicity and class, rose against the violation of the human rights of their children as Ganeshanathan in her fictive narrative presents the strong movement of Mothers' Front, by "women who would not leave their sons in any dark corners" (p. 120), which finally succeeded in getting their sons back. After years of living under constant monitoring, many survivors now believe that the younger generation has become too afraid and indifferent to standing up for their rights and "parents have given up hope of ever learning the fate of the thousands of missing children" even after culmination of the war (*Voice of America*, June 1, 2024).

Conclusion

With the defeat of Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, twenty-six years long Sri Lankan Civil War finally came to an end in 2009. With the inclusion of northern areas of Jaffna in national territory, state restored its writ in the remote areas of the country. But inclusion of territorial area into national geography brought a deadliest episode in the lives of Tamils. While Ganeshanathan's novel stands as a literary memorial site for victims to remind them of pains and sorrows faced by them, it also reminds victimizers of their atrocious and cruel role in the horrific war. As the family of Sashi was fractured in the war, on a larger level it is the manifestation of each and every Tamil family who lost their loved ones in the wake of war. Repercussions of war not only resulted in genocide but it also curtailed basic right of progress of Tamils. With the heavy bombardment in Jaffna, a huge humanitarian and infrastructural crisis rose, which further added to already broken Tamil community. Tamil community was vulnerable to devastation not only from the Tigers and the military but also from the native Sinhalese mobs. While the Tigers forcefully conscripted Tamils in their militia and used them as shields in the war against the military, the Sri Lankan military forces used modern heavy artillery and air-force to quench their thirst of vengeance against the Tamils and similarly IPKF was also not different as it raped innocent Tamil women and robbed them of their properties. V.V. Ganeshanathan's *Brotherless Night* becomes a basic document of violation of human rights of Tamils which will continue to remind victimizers of their ugly and black part during the Sri Lankan Civil War.

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