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Locating conflict in Elmo Jayawardena's *Sam's Story*

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation entitled **"**Locating conflict in Elmo Jayawardena's *Sam's Story"* is a research work solely carried out by under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Pratusha Bhowmik. I further declare that to the best of my knowledge this dissertation does not contain any part of any work which has been submitted for the award of any degree either by this university or by any other university/ deemed university without a proper citation.

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This is to certify that the dissertation titled "Locating conflict in Elmo Jayawardena's *Sam's Story"* is a bonafide research work done by Biswajit Boro, bearing the Enrollment no. PGENG408A22006 and Registration no. 013567/2022-2023 and that this dissertation is a product of his scholarly research work carried out under my supervision.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation will try to explore the idea of conflict as meaninglessness. A conflict is a prolonged conflict between organized groups or nations, typically involving armed confrontations and often resulting in significant loss of life, economic damage, and social disruption. Conflict can be caused by variety of factors, including territorial disputes, ideological differences, ethnic or religious tensions, competition for resources, power struggles, economic interests and political disagreement and these factors contributes to the outbreak of armed conflicts. Language is one of the reasons for the war and that happens in Jayawardena's novel *Sam's Story*. Conflict often leads to destruction, loss of life, and suffering, without offering substantial gains. In the capitalist world people are under possession of higher capitalist. Being influenced by the capitalist or authorities, people are unwillingly getting involved in a conflict, and end up being enemies with each other for no reason. In the novel the novelist shows using child soldier, how children are taking part unconsciously in the game of war instead of taking education, but these soldiers are basically belonged to the poor family. Both men and women have to suffer in the war, but women who have to suffer the most in comparison to men, this reflects the meaninglessness of conflict.

Key Words: Meaninglessness, violence, child soldier, victim, destruction.

CHAPTER: 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining Conflict

Social reality is characterized by conflict, which may emerge among individuals or groups of individuals. Conflicts can stem from various factors, such as social, religious, territorial, and property-related issues. The term "conflict" has its roots in the Latin word "confligere," meaning to impact each other. In sociology, conflict is described as a social process where two or more individuals seek to harm each other with the intention of eliminating the opponent.

Conflicts can be perceived as intricate systems with a wide array of diverse and sometimes unrelated elements. The parties involved in the conflict, often numerous and intertwined in complex connections, pursue different objectives, some of which may be hidden and evolve over time. This intricacy is particularly notable in conflicts within a nation or on a global scale, which is the main focus of this examination. Additionally, conflicts do not arise in isolation but in a dynamic setting, whether local, regional, or global, subject to constant change and unforeseen impacts on the conflict's evolution and participants. It is essential to acknowledge that the cessation of violence or the agreement on a compromise does not signify conflict resolution. Achieving a lasting peace involves a demanding and intricate process (Bartolucci and Gallo, 2010).

The instances mentioned previously illustrate a linear and mechanistic thought process, contrasting with the complex and adaptable nature of conflicts. Conflict is a sophisticated system characterized by interconnected elements that collectively demonstrate properties

beyond the sum of individual components. Comprehending conflicts requires a systemic approach and the incorporation of various social and scientific fields. System thinking, known for its emphasis on boundaries, causal loops, feedback mechanisms, interconnected subsystems, and delays, significantly differs from linear reasoning. These system elements, inherent in conflict frameworks, contribute to the complexity of conflicts, making them challenging to resolve and analyze.

Many nations have encountered internal armed conflicts since 1960. While civil war plays a central role in the development of numerous nations, it has been marginalized in economic research and education. Internal civil conflict has been prevalent over the past fifty years, a reality that was largely overlooked by economists until recently. Civil wars, or internal conflicts resulting in over 1,000 battle fatalities in a year, have affected one-third of all nations. Including civil conflicts with at least twenty-five battle fatalities annually raises the percentage to more than half. This internal warfare is not only widespread but also enduring, with all nations experiencing wars and conflicts since 1960. Twenty percent of nations have faced a minimum of ten years of civil war during this period.

Ethnic Groups and Conflict Ethnic nationalism is commonly seen as the primary factor behind group cohesion and, consequently, intergroup civil conflict; out of 709 minority ethnic groups identified worldwide, at least 100 have participated in ethnically motivated uprisings against the state between 1945 and 1998. "Modernist" theories emphasize that ethnic conflict emerges when marginalized groups in terms of social and political influence start undergoing economic modernization.

There are two noteworthy observations regarding social conflict that warrant attention. Initially, internal disputes within countries contribute significantly to the global toll of fatalities and adversities today. Since the conclusion of the Second World War, there have

been 22 interstate conflicts resulting in over 25 battle-related deaths annually, with 9 of them causing a minimum of 1000 casualties throughout the entire conflict history. The cumulative count of battle deaths in these conflicts is approximated to range from 3 to 8 million. Concurrently, the same timeframe has seen 240 civil conflicts with more than 25 battle-related deaths per year, and almost half of them resulted in more than 1000 fatalities. Estimates indicate a total of 5 to 10 million battle deaths in these civil conflicts. In addition to the direct casualties, 25 million non-combatant civilians have perished due to diseases and malnutrition, which is believed to be at least four times higher than violent deaths. Furthermore, over 40 million individuals were forcibly displaced by 2010. By that year, 30 civil conflicts were still ongoing.

Secondly, internal conflicts frequently exhibit ethnic characteristics. Over half of the civil disputes documented post-Second World War termination have been categorized as ethnic or religious conflicts. One of the criteria for labeling a conflict as ethnic is its involvement in a rebellion against the state in favor of a particular ethnic group. Such conflicts have impacted 14% of the globally classified 709 ethnic groups. Brubaker and Laitin, in their examination of internal conflicts during the latter half of the 20th century, highlight the fading prominence of the left-right ideological spectrum and the noticeable ethnicization of confrontations between challengers and incumbents. Horowitz, a prominent figure in the study of ethnic conflict, notes that the Marxist concept of class affiliation lacks empirical support in the data. He argues that Marx's theory aligns more closely with ethnic groups, indicating that in certain regions of Asia and Africa, the Marxist predictions have materialized in ethnic terms.

The examination of class and ethnicity as catalysts for discord occupies a central position within the realms of political science and sociology. Despite this, the field of economics has historically shown limited interest in this subject, with few exceptions, most of which are relatively recent. Conventional economic theory, grounded in a deep-rooted reverence for

property rights, often assumes that the actors involved in economic activities uphold these rights and do not resort to violent means to contest what they perceive as unjust distributions. However, Marxism stands out as a significant anomaly within the realm of economics, exerting a substantial influence, whether directly or indirectly, on the discourse surrounding conflict in other social sciences. The concept of class conflict, or more broadly, economic disparity, has long been regarded as the primary instigator of social unrest in societies that are industrialized or semi-industrialized. In the words of Sen, "the link between inequality and insurrection is undeniably strong."

The utilization of non-economic indicators like ethnicity or religion serves to address both of these challenges. Individuals on opposite sides of the ethnic divide are likely to possess similar economic statuses, resulting in immediate advantages from such conflicts: The disadvantaged group can be marginalized from the sector where they directly compete with the victors. Furthermore, each group will encompass both affluent and impoverished members, with the latter contributing labor for conflict and the former contributing financial resources for conflict. This indicates a compelling interplay between ethnic diversity and inequality, in which ethnic factions characterized by higher levels of intra-group inequality are more adept at engaging in conflicts. Additionally, it has been proposed that "horizontal" inequality (i.e., inequality across ethnic groups) stands as a significant correlate of conflict.

Armed conflicts arise due to divergent perspectives among individuals. These disparities may pertain to the control of land, economic concerns (such as access to natural resources), religious beliefs, cultural disparities, and ideological differences. Contentious issues often escalate into confrontations, potentially escalating into armed conflicts of varying magnitudes. Throughout history, there have been numerous instances of armed conflicts involving tribes, nations, rebellions, insurgent factions, guerrilla units, and terrorist entities. Achieving success in such conflicts involves deliberations on resource utilization, strategic maneuvers, and

tactical approaches. Addressing these considerations is a complex task, necessitating a precise delineation of objectives, a comprehensive evaluation of capabilities and limitations, and a meticulous examination of potential scenarios and courses of action. To this end, military strategists and defense experts employ models as tools, which represent conceptualizations of armed conflicts, their contexts, and potential outcomes. These conceptual models, hereinafter referred to as armed conflict (AC) models, are instrumental in scrutinizing threat scenarios, military maneuvers, and organizational arrangements.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The successful conclusion of a research project is primarily dependent on the adoption of an appropriate research methodology. It delineates the various steps necessary to address a research issue. The current study proposes a thorough examination of Elmo Jayawardena's narrative *Sam's Story*. The thesis will focus on conflict, its complexities, and a sophisticated depiction of conflict, analysing its effects on individuals and communities, as well as through historical occurrences, personal narratives, and the portrayal of violence. Jayawardena underscores the intricacies, contradictions, and repercussions linked to conflicts. The substantive findings will be substantiated by essays, articles, academic journals, and digital materials sourced from diverse outlets.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In *Funny Boy* (1994) by Shyam Selvadurai, the depiction of child soldiers is more subtle and implicit, reflecting the broader impact of the Sri Lankan civil conflict on children. The novel primarily focuses on the protagonist, Arjie, and his coming-of-age experiences amidst escalating ethnic tensions. The impact of the war is evident through the portrayal of young Tamil boys who are recruited by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). For example, Jegan, a family friend, becomes involved with the Tigers, highlighting how the conflict draws in young people. The presence of armed youths and the pervasive fear and disruption they cause in communities underscore the tragic involvement of children in the conflict.

In *Anil's Ghost* by Michael Ondaatje, the depiction of child soldiers is woven into the broader narrative of Sri Lanka's civil war. The novel follows Anil Tissera, a forensic anthropologist investigating human rights abuses. Through her journey, the brutal realities of the conflict emerge, including the use of child soldiers. One poignant example is the character of Sarath Diyasena, whose brother Gamini, a doctor, treats injured children conscripted into fighting. The presence of these child soldiers, often traumatized and coerced, highlights the devastating impact of the war on the youngest and most vulnerable, illustrating the profound human cost of the conflict.

"Children in War: Reintegrating Child Soldiers*"* article by Alcinda Honwana he addresses the issue of child soldiers by intertwining the narratives of violence, fear, and resilience recounted by children directly engaged in armed conflicts. Despite the prevalence of coercion in their recruitment, these individuals are not mere receptacles for violence. Transitioning from victims to perpetrators of extreme acts, many former child soldiers demonstrate a form of

'tactical agency' in responding to their immediate circumstances. Positioned in the liminal space between victimhood and perpetration, child soldiers hold a distinctive role within their communities and society at large. The paper explores the efficacy of local community approaches in facilitating the healing, reintegration, and rehabilitation of ex-child soldiers. In addition to addressing immediate post-war social recovery, these children and their families must also be granted opportunities for education, skills development, and employment to reconstruct their livelihoods.

"Ending the Sri Lankan Civil War" article by Sumit Ganguly he addresses the commencement of the Sri Lankan Civil War occurred in 1983 and extended until 2009. The genesis of the conflict can be attributed to Sri Lanka's colonial past and subsequent postcolonial measures that severely limited the social and economic rights of the minority Tamil community. A faction of the Tamil populace, perceiving that traditional political channel were ineffective in addressing existing grievances, resorted to violence, thereby sparking the civil war. Numerous local, regional, and global endeavors aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict ultimately proved fruitless. The utilization of a military approach, characterized by extreme brutality by the Sri Lankan armed forces, brought the conflict to an end. Nonetheless, minimal efforts have been made subsequently to tackle the fundamental issues faced by the Tamil population that had fueled the outbreak of the civil war.

"SECESSIONIST GUERRILLAS: A STUDY OF VIOLENT TAMIL INSURRECTION IN SRI LANKA, 1972-1987" This thesis by Santhanam Ravindran, examines the phenomenon of Tamil armed secessionism with a focus on understanding the underlying forces. An analysis of the preconditions leading to the violent conflict between the minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese in Sri Lanka is conducted in this article to provide insights. The failure of the political system to adequately address the fundamental Tamil demands has played a significant role in the emergence of Tamil armed secessionism. Various factors have also contributed to

the growth of Tamil secessionist movements. The key players in the secessionist struggle include the Sri Lankan government, the Indian central government in conjunction with the state government of Tamil Nadu, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, all of which have exerted substantial influence on the complexities of the Tamil secessionist insurrection.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

1. To understand the term 'conflicts' and it's politics.

2. *To analyse intricate relations of conflicts in Elmo Jayawardena's* Sam's Story*.*

3. *To understand the historical roots and causes of the Sri Lankan conflicts.*

4. *To understand the perspective of using child soldiers.*

5. To explore the socio-economic impact of the Sri Lankan civil war on different communities.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is conflict and how it is depicted in Elmo Jayawardena's *Sam's Story*?

2. *What are the historical roots and causes of the Sri Lankan civil conflicts?*

3. What were the main strategies and tactics employed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government during the civil conflicts?

4. What are the impacts of Sri Lankan civil conflicts on social paradigm, political system and international relations?

1.4 Structure of the Paper

This paper consists of four chapters. The first chapter titled as Introduction gives a brief overview of the issue discussed in the paper.

The second chapter named as the critique of conflict in *Sam's Story*.

The third chapter named as the narrativizing conflict Sam as a narrator.

The fourth chapter marks the conclusion of this paper.

CHAPTER: 2

THE CRITIQUE OF CONFLICT IN *SAM'S STORY.*

2.1 Brief Introduction of Conflict

Conflicts, whether at an interpersonal, societal, or global level, are inherent in human existence and stem from a variety of factors, such as differences in values, beliefs, interests, and needs. The manifestations of these conflicts vary, ranging from verbal disagreements among individuals to large-scale wars between nations. A comprehensive understanding of conflicts necessitates an exploration of their complexities, underlying causes, and repercussions.

Many conflicts are rooted in imbalances of power, resources, and opportunities, with economic inequality often acting as a trigger for social unrest and political turmoil. Perceived disparities can lead to the accumulation of resentment and grievances among marginalized groups, escalating tensions and resulting in confrontations. In addition, conflicts frequently arise from ideological disparities, where conflicting ideologies can breed animosity and hostility, exacerbating societal divisions.

Competition for limited resources, such as land, water, or energy, is another common source of conflict, especially as populations grow and resource scarcity becomes more acute. This competition can escalate into conflicts between different groups, states, or even nations, as evidenced by territorial disputes in the South China Sea or struggles over water access in the Middle East. Identity-based conflicts often stem from perceptions of group identity and belonging, where ethnic, racial, or religious differences can ignite tensions fueled by prejudice, discrimination, and historical grievances.

The advancement of technology and globalization has added new dimensions to conflicts, with cyber warfare emerging as a powerful tool for espionage, sabotage, and propaganda. Economic

interdependence has also introduced vulnerabilities that adversaries can exploit, leading to economic conflicts and trade disputes. Despite the destructive nature of conflicts, they can also serve as catalysts for positive change, sparking social movements and revolutions that challenge injustices and advocate for reform.

Resolving conflicts necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses underlying grievances while promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and compromise. Mediation and negotiation play crucial roles in helping parties find common ground and agree on mutually beneficial solutions. Additionally, establishing inclusive institutions, upholding human rights, and tackling socio-economic disparities are essential steps towards fostering sustainable peace.

Ethnic strife, frequently originating from longstanding historical resentments and driven by aspirations for control, has afflicted various societies worldwide, resulting in destructive internal conflicts. Central to these disputes are disparities in ethnic background, language, and ambitions for supremacy. The objective of this paper is to explore the diverse origins of ethnic animosity leading to civil conflicts, analyzing both past and present instances to elucidate these intricate dynamics.

Language plays a crucial role in instigating conflicts, as demonstrated in Jayawardena's literary creation, *Sam's Story*. The protagonist, Sam, serves as a lens through which the author portrays the ongoing clash between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. Sam, a member of the Sinhalese community, interacts with his Tamil friends Leandro and Janet, who work as servants at the 'River House'. Their constant disputes within the 'River House' stem from their divergent cultural backgrounds. Conflict and its aftermath, including devastation, loss of life, and suffering, seldom bring about substantial advantages. In a society driven by capitalist principles, individuals often find themselves under the sway of dominant capitalist

ideologies. Consequently, individuals may unknowingly find themselves embroiled in armed conflicts, transforming into adversaries without legitimate cause. Jayawardena, within the narrative, sheds light on the unintended recruitment of children as combatants in armed conflicts, diverting them from educational pursuits, especially those from underprivileged circumstances. The impact of warfare affects both sexes, yet women frequently bear the brunt of the suffering, emphasizing the irrationality of such hostilities.

Conflicts and wars are often the culmination of complex political dynamics shaped by leaders' ambitions, ideologies, and strategic calculations. Leaders may pursue aggressive policies to bolster their domestic support, divert attention from internal problems, or assert dominance on the global stage. National interests, economic considerations, and historical grievances also play significant roles in fueling conflicts.

2.2 In-dept Historical Background of Sri Lankan Conflict

Leaders' decisions to engage in war are influenced by a range of factors, including power struggles, security concerns, and alliances with other states. Propaganda and manipulation of public opinion can further drive societies towards militarism. Additionally, leaders may exploit ethnic, religious, or cultural divisions to justify aggressive actions or rally support for military campaigns. Ultimately, conflicts and wars reflect the exercise of political power by leaders who often prioritize their own agendas over the well-being of their citizens or the prospects for peace. Thus, understanding the political motivations of leaders is essential for comprehending the origins and dynamics of armed conflicts. The Sri Lankan civil conflict, which lasted for nearly three decades, was deeply intertwined with the political agendas of leaders on both sides. Initially sparked by ethnic tensions between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamil population, political leaders exacerbated these divisions for their own gain.

Sinhalese leaders exploited nationalist sentiments to consolidate power and maintain support among the majority population. Meanwhile, Tamil leaders sought autonomy or independence for their community, leveraging grievances to mobilize support and challenge the central government's authority. Throughout the conflict, leaders manipulated public perception, employed propaganda, and engaged in power struggles to advance their political agendas. Peace efforts were often stymied by leaders prioritizing their own political interests over finding a resolution to the underlying grievances driving the conflict. In essence, the Sri Lankan civil conflict exemplifies how the political ambitions and strategies of leaders can prolong and intensify ethnic tensions, leading to prolonged violence and suffering for the populace:

> "That war is purely political, to fulfil the empty ambitions of our leaders,' he would explain. 'It is a war for the rich to get richer and for the poor to die". (Jayawardena,46)

The utilization of juvenile combatants in armed conflicts is a profoundly concerning occurrence that persists in afflicting communities globally. It signifies a severe transgression of human rights and presents significant ethical, moral, and legal challenges. This paper delves into the political aspects encompassing the enlistment of child soldiers in areas of conflict, scrutinizing the fundamental drives, repercussions, and initiatives aimed at combating this deplorable custom. The enlistment of underage combatants is frequently motivated by a confluence of elements such as poverty, lack of access to education, political turmoil, and armed hostilities. Both insurgent factions and government armed forces exploit susceptible minors, employing tactics of coercion, manipulation, and direct aggression to induce them to become part of their forces.

In numerous conflict-ridden areas, financial hardship and economic privation are pivotal factors in the induction of child soldiers. Insurgent factions take advantage of economic destitution by offering monetary inducements to minors and their families in return for their recruitment. For destitute families grappling with survival, the prospect of sustenance, accommodation, and financial incentives may overshadow apprehensions regarding the hazards and repercussions of military involvement.

Ideological indoctrination, in addition to economic incentives, plays a crucial role in the recruitment of child soldiers. Vulnerable children are often targeted by militant groups who aim to instill extremist ideologies and propaganda glorifying violence, martyrdom, and a distorted concept of justice or retaliation. Adolescents, especially, who are susceptible to manipulation and in search of a sense of belonging, may be enticed by these narratives and enticed to join armed factions.

The enlistment of child soldiers brings about severe repercussions for the individuals involved, their families, and the broader society. Children compelled to partake in armed conflicts are subjected to unspeakable horrors such as violence, exploitation, sexual abuse, and psychological distress. Their childhoods are robbed from them, and their prospects put in jeopardy as they are utilized as tools of war, committing atrocities and enduring enduring physical and psychological wounds.

Child soldiers experience profound psychological anguish due to their exposure to violence, death, and deprivation. Many grapples with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and various other mental health conditions, all of which can have lasting impacts on their overall well-being and functionality. The process of reintegrating into civilian life poses a significant challenge as they strive to come to terms with their traumatic ordeals and confront the stigma associated with their prior involvement in armed conflicts.

Reintegrating ex-child soldiers back into society presents notable hurdles due to the societal judgment attached to their prior participation in warfare. They encounter bias, exclusion, and isolation from their communities, obstructing their capacity to reconstruct their lives and pursue meaningful opportunities in education, work, and social inclusion. Furthermore, many lack the essential services like emotional support, schooling, job training, and economic prospects, which further sustain cycles of poverty and susceptibility.

The utilization of child soldiers represents a blatant breach of international humanitarian laws, human rights laws, and children's rights. The enlistment, drafting, or deployment of individuals under 18 in armed conflicts is forbidden under global agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Additional Protocol concerning the participation of children in armed conflicts.

Despite the existence of these legal structures, a culture of impunity still thrives among those accountable for enlisting and exploiting underage combatants. Perpetrators, which include leaders, recruiters, and government figures, frequently avoid facing consequences for their actions, perpetuating cycles of violence and immunity. Challenges like feeble legal systems, absence of political determination, and limited resources for investigations and prosecutions hinder endeavors to hold wrongdoers responsible and ensure justice for victims.

Addressing the issue of child soldiers demands a multifaceted strategy encompassing prevention, safeguarding, rehabilitation, and reintegration initiatives. International bodies, governmental bodies, community organizations, and grassroots movements all play pivotal roles in increasing awareness, pushing for policy changes, offering humanitarian aid, and aiding in the recovery and reintegration of former child combatants.

Preventing the enlistment of child soldiers necessitates united efforts to tackle underlying causes like poverty, inequality, conflict, and lack of education. Investing in education, social

services, economic opportunities, and conflict prevention endeavors can help alleviate the fundamental reasons behind child recruitment and shield at-risk children from exploitation and mistreatment. Strengthening legal frameworks, enforcing accountability measures, and improving monitoring and reporting systems are crucial in discouraging enlistment and holding perpetrators responsible.

Efforts to reintegrate and rehabilitate former child soldiers should prioritize their physical, mental, and socio-economic requirements. Comprehensive programs that provide psychosocial aid, trauma therapy, education, vocational training, livelihood assistance, and community-based reintegration projects are crucial in aiding their transition from conflict to civilian life. Encouraging community acceptance, combating discrimination, and empowering survivors to regain their independence and respect are key components of successful reintegration efforts.

The enlistment of child soldiers constitutes a severe breach of human rights and a deep betrayal of the innocence and vulnerability of children. Tackling this abhorrent practice necessitates a thorough and coordinated reaction involving legal, ethical, humanitarian, and developmental strategies. By addressing the root causes, reinforcing protection mechanisms, and emphasizing the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers, we can strive towards a future where children are shielded from the terrors of armed conflict and given the opportunity to flourish in security, respect, and tranquility.

The writer endeavors to portray the extensive suffering of the Sri Lankan populace during the period of civil war through the narrative of Sam, the principal protagonist in the novel. A civil war, as we understand it, entails an armed confrontation between two factions residing within the borders of a specific nation or state. This conflict is often characterized by differing political, societal, or ethnic outlooks, as the opposing sides vie for control or autonomy.

A civil war is an armed confrontation between two factions residing within the boundaries of a particular nation or state. This conflict is frequently marked by divergent political, societal, or ethnic perspectives, as the opposing sides compete for dominion or self-governance. In the literary work entitled *Sam's Story*, Jayawardena effectively portrayed the experiences of Sri Lankan citizens amidst the civil war. The animosity existing between various ethnic groups often arises from a multifaceted interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. A noteworthy catalyst in this regard is the presence of linguistic diversity, which can erect barriers to comprehension and nurture a sense of "otherness" among different groups. Thus, in *Sam's Story*, two distinct communities are presented: the majority Sinhalese, who communicate in Sinhala, and the Tamil community, who converse in Tamil.

An illustrious and ruthless civil war occurred in Sri Lanka in this manner. The civil war in Sri Lanka primarily involved a confrontation between the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In 1976, the LTTE was established with the goal of establishing an independent Tamil state known as Tamil Eelam in the northeastern region of the island. The Sri Lankan civil war, which concluded in 2009 with the defeat of the LTTE, became the longest-running armed conflict in Asia.

The Sri Lankan civil war has its roots in the ongoing political tensions between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. The Tamils form a majority in the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka, while the Sinhalese dominate the central and southern parts. These two groups differ in language and religion, with the Tamils following Hinduism and speaking Tamil, while the Sinhalese adhere to the Theravada branch of Buddhism and speak Sinhalese. The population of Sri Lanka comprises approximately 70 to 75 percent Sinhalese and 15 percent Sri Lankan Tamils, indicating the majority status of the Sinhalese and the minority status of the Tamils. Despite the Tamil minority, a significant percentage of college students, ranging from 70 to 80 percent, belong to the Tamil community. This can be attributed to the

establishment of Christian missionary schools and other educational institutions in Northern Sri Lanka during British colonial rule. As the Tamil population is concentrated in the Northern region, a large number of Tamils were able to receive education. Consequently, when the British assumed control of Sri Lanka, the Tamil community was provided with greater representation in the civil services and other government positions compared to the Sinhalese, owing to their higher levels of education and proficiency in English.

The issue arose upon Sri Lanka's attainment of independence from British colonial rule. Upon achieving freedom in 1948, the establishment of a parliamentary democracy took place in Sri Lanka and Sinhalese majority came into in power. The Sinhalese government enacted several laws and policies aimed at benefiting the Sinhalese population, resulting in their increased education and employment opportunities. In 1956, the government declared Sinhalese as the official language of Sri Lanka, leading to job losses for the Tamil community. During the 1970s, discrimination against college education emerged, specifically targeting Tamil students who were prohibited from entering colleges. Furthermore, the government also banned Tamil literature, films, and magazines. Language holds significant importance within a culture. As a consequence of such discriminatory actions, Tamil youths began to join insurgency movements and engage in political activism. Multiple insurgency groups were formed, with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerging as the primary armed group.

Velupillai Prabhakaran spearheaded the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The primary objective of the LTTE was the complete secession of Tamilians from Sri Lanka. The renowned flag symbol of the LTTE, depicting a jumping tiger, was ingeniously crafted by its leader, Prabhakaran, in collaboration with an Indian artist. The organizational structure of the LTTE comprised two distinct wings: the Political wing and the Military wing, both of which were under the control of Prabhakaran. Furthermore, the Military wing itself was subdivided into three subgroups, namely the Black Tigers (Suicide wing), the Sea Tigers (Naval wing),

and the Air Tigers (Air wing). Notably, the LTTE even recruited and trained young children in martial arts. Employing guerrilla warfare tactics and suicide bombings, the LTTE engaged in conflict. An emblematic practice within the LTTE was the wearing of cyanide capsules by its soldiers, enabling them to choose suicide should they be apprehended. At that particular period, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged as the preeminent insurgent organization in Sri Lanka and the most formidable guerrilla force globally. In addition to law enforcement officers and political figures, they also directed their attacks towards government establishments. The Tamil political party in the northern Jaffna is also dominated by them, and they function as a clandestine administration.

2.3 India's Intervention in the Sri Lankan Civil War

The Sri Lankan Civil War, a protracted and brutal conflict, took place from 1983 to 2009 between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The roots of the conflict lay in ethnic tensions between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils. The Tamils, feeling marginalized and discriminated against by the Sinhalese-dominated government, demanded an independent state called Tamil Eelam in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

India's involvement in the Sri Lankan Civil War was driven by a combination of strategic, political, and humanitarian concerns. Tamil Nadu, an Indian state with a significant Tamil population, put pressure on the Indian government to support the Sri Lankan Tamils. Additionally, the geopolitical interests in maintaining regional stability and countering external influences, particularly from the United States and China, played a significant role.

In the early 1980s, as tensions in Sri Lanka escalated, India initially provided covert support to Tamil militant groups, including the LTTE, by offering training and sanctuary in Tamil

Nadu. This support was partly a response to the Indian government's domestic political pressures from Tamil Nadu, where sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamils was strong. However, India's support was not unlimited or unconditional, as the Indian government aimed to balance its support for the Tamils with maintaining good relations with the Sri Lankan government.

The turning point in India's intervention came in 1987 with the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, signed between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene. The accord aimed to resolve the conflict through a series of measures:

- Devolution of Power: The agreement proposed devolving power to the provinces, granting significant autonomy to Tamil-majority areas in the North and East.

- Disarmament of Militant Groups: It called for the disarmament of Tamil militant groups, including the LTTE.

- Deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF): India agreed to send a peacekeeping force to oversee the implementation of the accord and to help maintain peace in the region.

The deployment of the IPKF marked a significant escalation in India's involvement. Initially, the IPKF was welcomed by the Sri Lankan Tamils, who saw it as a protector against Sinhalese oppression. However, relations soon soured. The LTTE, unwilling to disarm and skeptical of the accord, began to see the IPKF as an occupying force. Clashes between the IPKF and the LTTE began, leading to a protracted and costly conflict for India.

The IPKF's mission was fraught with challenges. The force faced guerrilla warfare tactics from the LTTE, unfamiliar terrain, and a hostile local population. The Indian army, trained for conventional warfare, struggled against the LTTE's asymmetric warfare strategies. The conflict resulted in significant casualties on both sides and eroded the initial goodwill towards

the Indian intervention. Domestically, the IPKF mission became increasingly unpopular. The Indian public and political opposition criticized the government for becoming entangled in what seemed like an intractable conflict with no clear exit strategy. The financial cost, the loss of Indian soldiers, and the perception of mission failure further fuelled discontent.

By 1989, the Indian government, under Prime Minister V.P. Singh, decided to withdraw the IPKF. The withdrawal was completed by March 1990, marking the end of a controversial and costly intervention. The withdrawal was seen as an admission of the failure to achieve the mission's objectives. The immediate aftermath of the IPKF withdrawal was a resurgence of violence in Sri Lanka. The LTTE reasserted control over significant territories, and the Sri Lankan Civil War continued unabated. India's intervention had failed to bring about a lasting peace or a resolution to the ethnic conflict.

One of the most significant and tragic outcomes of India's involvement was the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by an LTTE suicide bomber in 1991. The assassination was in retaliation for the IPKF's actions against the LTTE. This event had a profound impact on Indian politics and its foreign policy towards Sri Lanka, leading to a more cautious and hands-off approach in the subsequent years.

India's intervention in the Sri Lankan Civil War was a complex and multifaceted operation driven by regional politics, ethnic solidarity, and strategic interests. While the intervention aimed to bring peace and stability to Sri Lanka, it ultimately highlighted the difficulties of external involvement in ethnic conflicts and the limitations of military force in achieving lasting political solutions. The legacy of the intervention remains a subject of analysis and reflection in both India and Sri Lanka, offering critical lessons for future peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts.

The war culminated on May 18, 2009, with the death of Prabhakaran and other top LTTE leaders, effectively dismantling the organization's command structure. The Sri Lankan government's declaration of victory marked the end of the war, though it left a legacy of humanitarian issues and calls for accountability over alleged war crimes and human rights abuses during the final stages of the conflict. The end of the Sri Lankan Civil War brought a fragile peace but also highlighted the need for reconciliation and rebuilding in a deeply divided society.

CHAPTER: 3

NARRATIVIZING CONFLICT SAM AS A NARRATOR

3.1 Introduction

Narrative denotes the aspect of storytelling that interlaces events, characters, and themes in order to construct a coherent and significant entirety. It serves as the guiding element that steers the audience through the ebbs and flows of a narrative, captivating them both emotionally and intellectually. Various manifestations of narratives exist, encompassing fiction, non-fiction, oral traditions, and visual mediums such as film and television.

At its essence, a narrative typically comprises distinct pivotal components: a plot that evolves over time, characters who impel the plot, a setting that furnishes context, and themes that communicate profound significances or messages. These components synergistically operate to craft an immersive encounter for the audience, enabling them to engage with the narrative on multiple planes.

Narratives fulfil diverse functions, ranging from entertainment and motivation to education and persuasion. They offer a perspective through which we can investigate the human experience, tackle intricate dilemmas, and contemplate our own existence. Whether it be a folk story transmitted across generations or a contemporary novel embodying the spirit of an era, narratives wield the ability to mold our comprehension of the world and of ourselves.

In the novel *Sam's Story,* the author Elmo Jayawardena employs a child named Sam as the narrator. The narrative unfolds through Sam's first-person perspective, depicting a young, uneducated rural boy who secures employment as a houseboy at the affluent River House in Colombo. Through Sam's viewpoint, the novel delves into the social and political milieu of Sri Lanka, which has endured 15 years of ethnic conflict and civil strife between the Sinhalese

and Tamils. Sam's understanding of the war is limited, yet he recognizes the Tamils as the perceived "foe" in the narrative. This portrayal underscores the prevalent lack of awareness and dissemination of misinformation among the populace.

3.2 Perspective of using child as a narrative

Using a child narrative perspective in storytelling serves multiple functions, each contributing intricacy and depth to the narrative. Juveniles often exhibit purity and lack of sophistication, enabling them to perceive the world with a fresh outlook unobstructed by preconceived ideas. Their viewpoint can unveil concealed truths and offer distinctive insights into intricate scenarios that adults may disregard. Observers or spectators frequently discover it simpler to empathize with juvenile characters due to their susceptibility and purity. Their challenges, victories, and revelations can elicit intense emotions and strike a chord with audiences on a profoundly personal level. Juvenile narratives can investigate a broad array of topics such as the passage into adulthood, loss of purity, formation of identity, familial interactions, and societal concerns. By adopting the perspective of a juvenile protagonist, narrators can probe into these topics with a feeling of immediacy and genuineness. Narratives narrated from a juvenile's viewpoint can educate both juveniles and adults alike. They are capable of imparting valuable life lessons, fostering moral growth, and cultivating empathy by granting readers the opportunity to perceive the world through the eyes of a juvenile. Incorporating juvenile protagonists from various backgrounds, societies, and life experiences can offer visibility for marginalized communities and advance inclusivity in storytelling. It enables readers from diverse backgrounds to identify with literary and media representations. In spite of their apparent simplicity, juvenile narratives can be laden with intricacy. They can integrate elements of fantasy, allegory, and symbolism to communicate profound meanings and themes.

The discrepancy between a juvenile's innocence and the intricacies of the world surrounding them can establish layers of profundity in the narrative. Juvenile narratives can captivate audiences with their sense of awe, exploration, and creativity. They present an avenue to escape into realms brimming with enchantment, exploration, and boundless possibilities, appealing to both juveniles and adults. Essentially, employing a child narrative perspective enables storytellers to scrutinize the human encounter in a manner that is both widespread and deeply intimate, resonating with hearts and intellects across generations.

3.3 In-dept analysis of the Book

Published in 2001 as Jayawardena's inaugural work, *Sam's Story* is a highly regarded piece of literature within the English literary realm of Sri Lanka. Subsequently, the book underwent translation into Sinhala (by Sisil Rodrigo) and was also adapted into a cinematic rendition titled "Samige Kathava" by Priyankara Vittanachchi. The narrative centres around a young servant hailing from a rural village in the southwestern region, who finds employment under a benevolent master residing in a town-house known as River House. Within the confines of River House, Sam gradually integrates himself into a harmonious environment, becoming an integral part of a welcoming society. Elmo Jayawardena, during various public appearances and interviews, openly asserts that the character of Sam in his novel draws inspiration from one of his own household servants. Notably, in the book's acknowledgment section, the author recounts that the real-life Sam merely smiled upon learning that Jayawardena had dedicated an entire novel to him.

The titular character in *Sam's Story* is depicted as a "slow-witted" and "simple-minded" individual, traits that serve as the primary focus around which the narrative's actions and humor revolve. Throughout the storyline, Sam lacks autonomy in shaping his own portrayal,

as his thoughts, feelings, worries, and behaviors are entirely crafted by Jayawardena. Even when Sam's innermost musings and interpretations, often subject to mockery even by his closest associates, are revealed through his recollections, the manner in which they are presented caters to the comedic sensibilities of the sophisticated urban audience that Jayawardena targets. Despite the author's perceived control akin to a ventriloquist manipulating his puppet to articulate Sam's words and emotions, instances arise in *Sam's Story* where the supposedly naive protagonist exhibits sharpness and cleverness that defy his initial rustic image. This oversight in narrative construction results in a portrayal characterized by extremes: from instances where the simple boy forgets mundane tasks like tying coconut shells for collecting rubber sap to moments where he astutely deduces suspicions of espionage surrounding Mr. Gunasekera's absent servant Velu due to wartime paranoia. Sam astutely comments on the preferential treatment of dogs over humans in affluent households and eloquently discusses the futility of war with sophistication and insight.

For Sam, the Master and his family – including the Boy and Girl (the master's children) who return from overseas for their vacation – are viewed as benefactors in a narrow sense of the term. The family's refinement and affluence afford them the unique privilege to regard Sam as a salvageable figure, akin to a barbarian, perhaps. The daughter endeavours to persuade Sam that his animosity towards the entire Tamil community lacks foundation, arguing that it is unjust to harbour disdain for individual unknown to us. This suggests that the capacity to comprehend national affairs, alter perspectives, and influence viewpoints is restricted to a specific segment of society: the sophisticated elite who assume the roles of the educated and morally upright. Jayawardena's endeavour to interpret the world on behalf of Sam, from Sam's perspective, exemplifies a prerogative of the privileged class who perceives themselves as possessing insights into the world inaccessible to the common populace. Regarding the issue of ethnic division, the portrayal of Sam's family, friends, and acquaintances in the village is

inadequately detailed. Despite Madiya's impassioned criticism of the army and its soldiers' plight, as well as the affluent's apathy towards the conflict, it is reduced to a resentful - and somewhat contrived - narrative solely aimed at depicting the destitute lives of the poorer classes for whom enlisting represents one of the few viable employment options left.

If a person in Sam's position were to authentically recount his experiences, it is improbable that he would unquestioningly appreciate the opulence and lifestyle he encounters at River House. Nor would he passively regurgitate the socio-political analyses prevalent there. The author benefits from having a protagonist who expresses gratitude for the sustenance and accommodation he is provided, and who does not object - and even takes pleasure in - the nightly interactions with a coworker, oblivious to the exploitative nature of such encounters. As the central character of an eponymous novel, Sam fails to narrate his own story, but what is more disheartening is that he is portrayed as entirely ignorant of and powerless against his circumstances by the author who speculates on Sam's thoughts, words, and actions.

In Sri Lanka, the populace comprises primarily of two major communities: the Sinhalese, who constitute the majority, and the Tamil, who are a minority group. Jayawardena's novel, *Sam's Story*, delves into the ethnic tensions existing between these two communities. It is evident that cultural animosity can result in exclusion and bias across various domains such as education, employment, housing, and social engagements. This marginalization has the potential to foment resentment and fuel societal unrest and discord. Within the narrative, Leandro and Janet hail from the Tamil community, while Sam belongs to the Sinhalese community, and the conflicts between them are vividly portrayed:

> "Leandro and Janet were both of the same kind-the kind that made war and killed soldiers and threw bombs at our leaders. I didn't like them" (Jayawardena,7).

3.4 Using child soldiers

In recent decades, the focal point has been on children and youth who play significant roles as both targets and perpetrators of violence. Children are consistently among the primary casualties in nearly all armed conflicts and civil wars. The situation has deteriorated in recent times due to the rise of civil wars and conflicts involving unclear state actors, leading to heightened suffering among children in these 'irregular' conflicts.

The engagement of young individuals in armed conflicts is not a modern occurrence; rather, it has deep historical roots in both Western and non-Western societies. Historically, in Europe during the Middle Ages, young boys from the upper class aspiring to become knights would serve as squires. Trained in combat skills and the responsibilities of knighthood, these boys would eventually accompany their masters into battle, providing protection if the knight was incapacitated (see Brett and McCallin 1996). In Italy, a young foot soldier following a knight into battle was referred to as an "infante," literally translating to "child," collectively forming the "infanteria" or infantry.

Young people have frequently been actively involved in warfare and political turmoil across various regions. In revolutions driven by strong ideological motives, children and youth have often taken up arms. Narratives of struggles for national liberation often highlight the courageous acts of both male and female children who were too young to officially join military forces or guerrilla groups. Presently, children serve as combatants in conflict zones worldwide, including areas like Angola, Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Great Lakes region in Africa, Cambodia, Colombia, Northern Ireland, Palestine, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka, among others. The extent of the contemporary issue is unparalleled, both in terms of the sheer number of young individuals engaged and the level of their involvement. The substantial participation

of children in warfare has prompted the international community to take more decisive measures to safeguard their rights within conflict settings.

In Elmo Jayawardena's *Sam's Story*, the narrative sheds light on the involvement of child soldiers in Sri Lanka by depicting the experiences of Sam's family and their community. This literary work offers a poignant and perceptive representation of the utilization of child soldiers in Sri Lanka, illustrating the economic hardships, psychological distress, and societal repercussions faced by families and individuals entangled in the midst of civil strife. The novel underscores the severe impact of war on young individuals and the wider society.

The recruitment process and the repercussions on Sam's family are evident in the narrative. For instance, Sam's elder brother, Jaya, was enticed to join the military due to the promise of a steady income, a beacon of hope in their financially struggling town. Unfortunately, Jaya lost his life in the conflict, leaving behind a grieving family. In a touching gesture of solidarity, fellow soldiers came forward to offer financial assistance to Jaya's mourning family, highlighting the harsh realities of poverty and economic desperation that can drive young men to the frontlines, even in the most hesitant communities.

Upon the arrival of Jaya's companions in a solemn manner to carry out his final ceremonies, the responsibility for the funeral expenses was assumed by the military. This act of benevolence emphasized the extensive impact of warfare, not solely on individual households, but also on the cohesion of the entire society. During this contemplative juncture, the flickering flames of Jaya's funeral pyre symbolized more than just the loss of a single life; rather, they represented the collective grief of a community deeply affected by the unyielding progression of conflict. Another sibling of Sam chooses to desert, finding himself incapable of coping with the brutality and psychological anguish stemming from the ongoing conflict. This instance underscores the psychological strain and turmoil experienced by youthful soldiers, prompting

some to abandon their responsibilities. The narrative of the book elucidates the lack of purpose in war as perceived by Sam and Leandro, disillusioned by the brutality they have witnessed, resulting in a mutual sense of grief and an acknowledgment of the irrationality of the conflict. This humanizing episode transcends racial barriers and accentuates the shared suffering induced by warfare. The utilization of child soldiers is evident within the novel's narrative:

> "Most of them are just children; maybe ten or twelve years old, maybe younger. A lot of them are young girls. I have seen some of them when their bodies are brought to our camp. Dead, with their eyes open. I don't think they know anything more about this war than we do. We kill them because they came to kill us, neither of us knowing why we are doing this to each other". (Jayawardena,118)

Individuals from impoverished backgrounds frequently engage in warfare or confrontations due to various factors such as financial desperation, limited opportunities, coercion, and manipulation by political or military figures. For numerous economically disadvantaged persons, affiliating with armed factions may present an avenue for earning income, securing food, or finding shelter in regions where economic prospects are scant. Furthermore, recruitment strategies employed by militant organizations often target susceptible populations, offering them a sense of purpose, belonging, or retribution against perceived adversaries. In certain scenarios, economically deprived communities might be compelled into conscription or exploited as expendable resources by conflicting factions. Furthermore, the disintegration of societal frameworks and the disruption of livelihoods resulting from conflict can propel impoverished individuals into dire circumstances where joining armed groups appears as the sole viable means of survival. Consequently, poverty and conflict frequently establish a detrimental cycle, with marginalized communities disproportionately enduring the repercussions of violence and hardship:

"In your army, only poor people's sons become soldiers'. The rich people's sons play cricket". (Jayawardena,47)

Affluent individuals seldom engage physically in warfare or confrontations, preferring to issue directives and deliberating about such matters from the comfort of their homes, avoiding direct involvement. They refrain from exposing their offspring to the perils of war, remaining detached from the anguish of losing loved ones in conflicts. Their involvement is predominantly limited to discussions and deliberations:

"They are playing cricket or watching cricket or going to big hotels to eat their meals. They never go to fight. So, they don't have to die, or run like I did. They don't have to be cowards. That is the war for you". (Jayawardena,117)

The decision made by affluent individuals to protect their children from warfare is a combination of innate protective instincts, preservation of social status, and strategic planning. Initially, the wealthy prioritize the safety and well-being of their offspring, shielding them from the perils of conflicts. Subsequently, they may utilize their wealth to secure educational opportunities or alternative pathways that avoid military involvement. Furthermore, the maintenance of family lineage and societal position plays a pivotal role. In numerous cultures, the young members of privileged families are groomed for leadership responsibilities, necessitating their safeguarding from physical harm. Ultimately, there is a strategic element involved; through safeguarding their progeny, the affluent ensure the perpetuation of their heritage and impact, positioning them for forthcoming societal and economic pursuits, rather than jeopardizing their lives in battle:

"We are fighting and dying and the people in power who want us to fight are sending their children to other countries to keep them away from the war". (Jayawardena,117-118).

During the prolonged civil war in Sri Lanka, lasting nearly three decades from 1983 to 2009, the nation encountered substantial obstacles in tackling poverty, particularly in the conflict-affected areas. The conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the separatist faction, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), resulted in extensive displacement, casualties, infrastructure devastation, and economic turmoil. Below are several methods employed by Sri Lanka to address poverty amidst the civil war:

- Humanitarian Aid: The government, in collaboration with international entities and non-governmental organizations, delivered humanitarian support to internally displaced individuals (IDPs) and vulnerable communities impacted by the conflict. This aid encompassed provisions like food, shelter, healthcare, and other essential services to alleviate immediate hardships.

- Economic Development Initiatives: Despite the ongoing conflict, the Sri Lankan government executed diverse economic development schemes aimed at diminishing poverty. These initiatives concentrated on enhancing infrastructure, agriculture, microfinance, and vocational training to generate job prospects and enhance livelihoods, particularly in conflict-stricken regions.

- Peacebuilding Endeavors: Various efforts were undertaken to pursue a peaceful resolution to the conflict through negotiations and peace dialogues. While multiple endeavors were made over the years to achieve a political agreement, it was not until 2009 that the Sri Lankan military overcame the LTTE, culminating the civil war.

- International Support: Sri Lanka received aid from the global community, encompassing financial assistance, technical knowledge, and capacity-building aid to address the humanitarian and developmental obstacles posed by the conflict. Entities such as the United Nations, World Bank, and different donor nations played a vital role in bolstering poverty mitigation endeavors.

- Reconstruction and Rehabilitation: Post the cessation of the civil war in 2009, Sri Lanka embarked on an extensive process of reconstruction and rehabilitation to re-

establish infrastructure, revive livelihoods, and facilitate the repatriation of displaced communities. This process entailed housing aid, demining operations, and assistance for livelihoods and economic revitalization in the former conflict zones.

Despite these endeavors, poverty persisted as a continual obstacle in Sri Lanka, especially in regions affected by the conflict. The enduring repercussions of the war on social unity, economic progress, and governance continued to present hindrances to poverty alleviation initiatives. Nevertheless, the cessation of the civil war instilled optimism for a more stable and prosperous future for the nation, allowing a shift towards sustainable development and poverty mitigation.

In essence, *Sam's Story* offers a detailed and multifaceted portrayal of the prevalent poverty in Sri Lanka, underscoring the evident inequalities, restricted access to resources, exploitation of the underprivileged, and the resilience of those endeavoring to persevere in the midst of adversity. Sam hails from a minute, secluded village where most dwellings consist of a single room, starkly contrasting with the grandiose and well-furnished River House where he is employed as a domestic worker. This stark juxtaposition accentuates the economic gaps and substantial disparity between the impoverished rural areas and the relatively affluent urban populace.

Sam's mother encounters the strenuous challenge of trekking miles and enduring prolonged waits solely to acquire fundamental medical care. Additionally, the prescribed medications and suggested dietary enhancements are financially unattainable for their family. This portrayal serves as a poignant reflection of the harsh reality of restricted healthcare access and essential amenities in the rural, impoverished zones of Sri Lanka.

Sam's elder sibling enlists in the military due to lucrative pay, despite the reluctance of village boys to do so, illuminating how poverty propels young men into military service. This

exemplifies how the financial struggles encountered by the underprivileged render them susceptible to exploitation, even within the backdrop of the ongoing civil conflict.

The author underscores the profound impact of poverty on individuals by stating, 'when a person is poor, they don't have hope,' unveiling a prevailing sense of resignation and the lack of prospects for social progress among the impoverished characters. The narrative contrasts the privileged upbringing of the master's offspring, who receive education overseas, with the stark constraints faced by Sam and his siblings.

Despite the somber realities of poverty, Sam displays remarkable resilience and a sense of humor, maneuvering through life's challenges with composure and discovering instances of happiness and contentment. This portrayal humanizes the ordeal of poverty, emphasizing the unyielding fortitude of the human spirit in adversity.

CHAPTER:4

CONCLUSION

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has been a long-standing issue deeply rooted in historical grievances, inequality, and oppression. *Sam's Story*, a poignant narrative by Elmo Jayawardena, provides a window into the social and political landscape of Sri Lanka, ravaged by violence for over 15 years. Through the eyes of Sam, a simple yet profound character, the novel delves into the complexities of life in a country torn apart by ethnic strife.

The conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has its origins in the post-independence era, where ethnic tensions escalated due to perceived inequalities and discrimination. The disenfranchisement of Tamil migrant plantation workers, the imposition of Sinhala as the official language, and the favoritism towards Tamils during British colonial rule laid the groundwork for ethnic strife. The formation of the LTTE in 1976 under Velupillai Prabhakaran marked a significant turning point, as the group campaigned for a Tamil homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka.

Sam's character in the novel embodies the struggles faced by many individuals caught in the crossfire of ethnic violence. His journey from a rural village to working as a houseboy in Colombo reflects the stark disparities between urban and rural life in Sri Lanka. The loss of his brother to the conflict, the economic hardships, and the psychological scars he carries depict the harsh realities faced by many Sri Lankans during this tumultuous period.

Over the years, various peace initiatives and cease-fire agreements have been attempted, including the 2002 cease-fire brokered by Norway. However, these efforts have been marred by repeated breakdowns in peace talks, escalating violence, and the eventual military offensive that led to the defeat of the LTTE in 2009. The aftermath of the conflict has left deep scars on

the country, with accusations of human rights violations on both sides and a need for lasting reconciliation and healing.

Sam's Story serves as a poignant reminder of the human cost of conflict and the resilience of individuals like Sam who navigate through the chaos with courage and dignity. As Sri Lanka grapples with the aftermath of the conflict, it is crucial to address the root causes of the ethnic conflict, promote inclusivity, and work towards a sustainable peace that acknowledges the grievances of all communities. The complexities of the conflict require a multifaceted approach that addresses historical injustices, promotes dialogue, and fosters a sense of unity among diverse ethnic groups.

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, as depicted in *Sam's Story*, is a testament to the enduring impact of violence, loss, and the quest for peace in a nation scarred by decades of turmoil. By reflecting on the experiences of individuals like Sam, we gain a deeper understanding of the human toll of conflict and the imperative of forging a path towards reconciliation, justice, and lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

The portrayal of ethnic conflict in Sri Lankan literature has evolved over time, reflecting the changing dynamics and complexities of the conflict. Initially, literature focused on documenting the historical and sociopolitical aspects of the conflict, highlighting the grievances and struggles of different ethnic groups. As time progressed, literature began to delve deeper into the psychological impact of the conflict on individuals and communities, exploring themes of trauma, loss, and resilience.

Moreover, there has been a shift towards a more nuanced and multifaceted representation of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lankan literature. Authors have started to explore the root causes of the conflict, the role of identity politics, and the impact of historical injustices on present-day society. This shift has allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict,

moving beyond simplistic narratives to capture the complexities and nuances of the ethnic divide.

Additionally, contemporary Sri Lankan literature has also started to focus on reconciliation, healing, and the quest for peace. Authors are exploring themes of forgiveness, dialogue, and coexistence, offering a vision of hope and unity amidst the turmoil of the conflict. This shift towards reconciliation reflects a growing awareness of the need to move beyond the past grievances and work towards a shared future for all communities in Sri Lanka.

In summary, the portrayal of ethnic conflict in Sri Lankan literature has evolved from a focus on documenting historical events to a more nuanced exploration of the psychological, social, and political dimensions of the conflict. This evolution reflects a deeper engagement with the complexities of the conflict and a growing emphasis on reconciliation and peacebuilding in contemporary Sri Lankan literature.

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