

TAMIL TIGER 'MARTYRDOM' IN SRI LANKA: FAITH IN SUICIDE FOR NATIONHOOD?

Introduction

The paper focuses on the 'suicide-martyrdom' deployed by the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE) of Sri Lanka as a political strategy for self determination and liberation from the 'Sinhala hegemony'. The protagonists have given a new political-religious meaning to the historically celebrated acts of religious martyrdom, which took place in the name of faith and belief. Martyrdom was characteristically known as witness to 'astute faith' and the 'reward of paradise' but is systematically transposed in the present conflict into the 'planting of seeds' of a suicide-martyr sharing and dying for the vision of liberation and self-rule. The families of these exceedingly motivated men and women suicide strikers are held in high esteem within the community.

Suicide strikers do not believe that the suicide acts they commit are lethal. They are portrayed to be valiant acts of honour and sacrifice on behalf of the family, ethnic community, and more importantly against the 'terrorising other' whose 'acts of violence' must be terminated. The suicide strikers hail from an agonising and violence-ridden past, directed at them or their kith and kin. This agony is turned in to an ecstatic experience both for the individual and the community by an elusive combination of pain and bliss realising in the same person, transforming the individual in to a zealous striker. It is performed not as an act of violence, but a resolute sacrifice for the sake of compatriots and their freedom.

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I draw some aspects from the research and writings of Peter Schalk and Michael Roberts who have addressed the same subject area on martyrdom as a form of secular resistance, and the latter, on religious aspects in the military formation of a suicide striker and in the aftermath of the mission. I argue that the reconstruction of an astute *faith in suicide* and its ritualisation as a well crafted political tool and as a powerful means to instil fear psychosis in the enemy for the creation of a separate state. The concept of suicide and the suicide striker within the LTTE with its primary secular political hermeneutic has now embraced a phase of expanding into a notion of patriotic heroism, in the name of statehood of Tamil Eelam bordering on religious-cultural sentiments. Suicide has been immortalised evoking folk religious fervour in the Hindu and Catholic traditions of the Tamil masses, especially with the burial procedures of the dead cadres, both with and without dismembered body parts, as it is important for the movement to carry on with the political tempo and the momentum of the cause².

Some Theories of Suicide

Emile Durkheim, father of sociology provided key sociological categories to read the phenomenon of suicide. His findings on *Suicide* was one of the groundbreaking sociological monographs, unique in the field of sociology published in 1897 and remains fundamental to research and study of suicide. Durkheim was a pioneer in classifying the social moorings of the phenomenon of suicide which was later developed and expanded in the fields of psychoanalysis and medical sciences. Durkheim believed that the social bond is composed of two factors, which are social integration (attachment to other individuals within society) and social regulation (attachment to society's norms). He believed that suicide rates may increase when extremities in those factors occur. It is proved true from an individual within a family context, to a more complex majority-minority conflict situation as in the case of the Tamil minority and the Sinhala majority in Sri Lanka.

Durkheim has differentiated between four types of suicide, egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide, anomic suicide and fatalistic suicide³. I specifically discuss in this paper, Durkheim's theory of altruistic suicide which is used to interpret LTTE suicide strikes as martyrdom, and therefore an act of altruism and self sacrifice for the sake of freedom and self rule. Altruism is a state that is opposite to egoism, in which the individual is extremely attached to the society. In the case of LTTE, the suicide carders popularly known as Black tigers, have an admirable devotion to its leadership and the dream cause

² In Kovilporativu, an impoverished, rebel-controlled village of eastern Batticaloa district, about 225 kilometres (140 miles) east of the capital Colombo, some 400 people led by 30 mothers of suicide bombers and Tiger cadres carrying rifles took part in a parade across the village on 5 July 2006. A float carried portraits of fallen black tigers (*mavirar*), prominently displaying a cut out of a uniformed guerrilla with a grenade tied to his neck.

³ Thompson, Kenneth. *Emile Durkheim*, (London: Tavistock Publications. 1982) p. 109-113

for a separate state. This altruism is linked to liberation of their compatriots from tyranny and injustice which is considered sublime and transcendental even though there is no definitive reward of a paradise as in the case of Jihadist suicide strikers. The strikers' lives are valued so much by the political protagonists and its propaganda that they are made to believe that the precious life they hold, must be given up in order to fulfill the higher cause of creating a state and the unification of their nation. In other words, when an individual is too heavily integrated into an ideology and its propaganda machine, he or she then will opt for severe commitments, even to the extent of committing suicide. Preservation of his or her own life then would be secondary if the society's norms ask for the person's death. Most Jihadist organizations work on the same premise. However the LTTE has been able to successfully inculcate altruism without a 'god talk' by redefining and immortalizing the notion of statehood and its creation as the ultimate sacrifice.

Roberts identifies a gross generalization both by the media and the academia to portray Tigers as secularists contrasting them with Jihadists whose moorings are Islamic. He attempts to differentiate the same Cartesian dualism which was also the problem of Orientalists who carved out an 'Orient out there', creating an Orient and an Occident which paved the way for the debate on 'self' and the 'other'. It is interesting that post-structuralists and post-colonial studies question both Descartes' and the European Enlightenment that provide a basis for a specific epistemology, which deified reason and bifurcated the understanding of 'other' in relation to the self.

The anti Cartesian theories of Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard evoke almost a 'Nietzschean assault' on the historical and the epistemological domination. This self-imbued omnipotence and subjective consciousness marginalised the 'other' which had filtered to the ethnic and cultural hegemonies between majorities and minorities. Postcolonial critics further suggest that it's not only marginalisation of the 'other' but also the perception and naming the 'other' as dangerous, that must be 'dealt with' appropriately. Both parties in the present conflict in Sri Lanka are bent on 'demonising the other' which has led to the denigration of both communities, riddled with suspicion and mutual hatred. The political rhetoric behind the war slogans with religious connotations and statements such as, 'those who are not with us are against us' has further depicted the dichotomised nature of society. This socio-political cancer has infected many conflict ridden localities across the globe. Sri Lanka remains one example of a majority-minority conflict zone and displays an ardent obstinacy both by the majority and the minority in the conflict, in portraying the 'other' as the sole enemy of the 'self'. Faith in suicide for statehood, as in the case of the LTTE and the Sinhala institutions' clamour for territorial integrity of the unitary nature of the state, is a classic story of an unfinished majority-minority rivalry. It portrays the imaginative failure, the institutional decay and the global impact of power dynamics on previous regional soft spots of various political landscapes.

Durkheim's notion of altruistic suicide and its strategic deployment as a 'weapon' by the LTTE, and similar groups to achieve political objectives, is seen both as an end in their political tolerance levels and a beginning of a pathological behaviour. The suicide strike method and the use of counter repressive military means to combat it indicate a violence ridden society and its dynamics with little or no recourse to the middle ground of negotiation, compromise and consensus. These symptoms of subversive war mongering and its rhetoric are not only an escalation of violence but a combination of a historicisation of conspiracy theories, political failure and moral decadence of a society for positive alternatives. The creation of a suicide striker, what supports and what led to such a model to redress grievances indicate invalidation and a gross failure of human potential to create a society of, justice and fairness, equanimity and compassion.

Tamil Tigers and Suicide Strikes

The Tamil Tigers are not the pioneers of the suicide strike as a weapon against their enemy, yet they remain the most effective in terms of achieving successful strikes. Tamil Tigers first use of suicide as a weapon was on 5th July 1987 when Miller, a member of LTTE, drove an explosives-laden truck into an army camp temporarily housed at a school in Nelliady in the northern Jaffna peninsula. Since then, the suicide cadres were known as the Black tigers. They have not only been emulated by the likes of Hamas in the Palestinian campaign against Israeli occupation but also by the Al-Qaeda terror network. The LTTE have enhanced its percentage of successful strikes in terms of managing the human weapon to carefully inflict maximum destruction to those who pose the largest threat. Tamil Tigers believe that their special suicide squad is key factor in the creation of an independent state for the 3.2 million ethnic Tamil minority. It is a fact that over 275 Black tigers have died in suicide missions since 1987. Yogaratman Yogi, an LTTE official, reports via the Voice of Tigers radio program that "there are many groups in the world using suicide bombers but the methods of our Black Tigers are more effective and incredible". Yogi referring to widespread criticism against the group for using human bombs said that "many countries in the world fear Black tigers. Anxious that other groups may emulate them, these countries ridicule the carders and are bent on creating a bad opinion against them". He further states that the "war itself is violent. There are no soft methods in it. Weren't bombs made to blow up and kill men? So why there is a cry if only a man becomes a human bomb"⁴. Yogaratman's argument justifies both the uniqueness of devising the LTTE suicide striker as a weapon and its deployment as combat machinery against the enemy.

The LTTE suicide strikers are meticulously chaperoned both on the mission of the Tamil Eelam (state) and the importance of their own commitment to their people, and

⁴ See. "Lanka's Tamil Tiger leader defends using human bombs", Associated Press, Wed July 5, 2006 10:10 ed. Ashok Sharma, KOVIL-PORATIVU, Sri Lanka (AP)

the mission that they are to perform for the liberation of Tamil Eelam. The strikers see no contradiction between the ideology and the realisation of Tamil Eelam by using the life they have in their hand. A suicide striker is different to a soldier who goes to the battle field, and is not focused on dying but counterattacking the enemy. For the soldier it is paramount to live, as it is in through survival that he/she can defeat or drive away the enemy. In contrast the suicide striker plunges into a hive of activity in the guise of a civilian, focused on one single mission, of striking the assigned target. The regular soldier ensures chances of survival by calculating his/her chances to survive, whereas the suicide striker's sole attention is to eliminate the target by using one's life. The suicide striker kills so that others may live through his or her act of heroism, a devotional sacrifice for the cause of Tamil Eelam.

Martyrdom for Statehood

The notion of LTTE martyrdom has evoked religious-cultural emotions within the Tamil community, which in return has been a lucrative catchments area for further recruits for the rank and file of the black tigers. Alongside the concept of 'one suicide striker, one target' was the development of the cyanide vial (*kuppi*, reported to be produced in Germany and assembled elsewhere) is considered a friend (*tholan*) especially among women carders facing capture. The cyanide vial is dear to the carders to prevent interrogation as this kind of suicide is regarded as an anticipation of death at the hands of the enemy.

The Judeo Christian concept of a martyr is one who suffers in mind and body for one's beliefs but bravely succumbs to the torturer. The submission of a Christian martyr virtually preempts and presupposes redemption in Christian theological terms. It ratifies one's fidelity to what one believes in and becomes a beacon of strength and courage to the community. Christian martyrs' vicarious death epitomizes the faithfulness and the life example of the Christian pedagogy, in the manner and the style of the unconditional submission of Jesus, to the will of his father. When Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was threatened by the clandestine death squads to renounce his forthright option against injustice to Salvador's poor, his words were sharp and deeply theological, "let my blood become the seeds of liberation for my people". He was assassinated while celebrating mass and ever since he has become a modern Christian iconic martyr of steadfast love and sacrifice in the Christian world, perhaps more popular than his superior, the late John Paul II, who seemed to have expressed his disapproval of liberation theology and the Latin American pastoral priorities of the time. Romero in Christian praxis is an undisputed Christian martyr accepted by the people while John Paul II may be raised to sainthood by the Vatican authorities. All Christian martyrs are saints but not all saints are considered martyrs. Both emulate different sentiments, human emotion and endearment.

The Sanskrit word *tayagi* (one who abandons life) becomes *tayaki* in Tamil is distinctly different to the Judeo Christian concept of martyrdom. On the contrary, Peter Schalk is of the view that the LTTE 'martyr' has chosen neither submission nor redemption for oneself in the act of martyrdom but ready to get killed in the act of killing so that some others may be liberated. In the mind of the suicide striker he/she does not abandon life in vain but believes that it fulfills the national aspiration for a separate state for his/her compatriots who are suffering at the hands of the enemy. It is for this reason that LTTE as an organization has blended the concept of *tayaki* (one who abandons) and the concept of *mavirar* (great hero) who are commemorated on 27th November in the Tigers controlled areas and by the Tamil Diaspora communities in London, Toronto and other major cities of the world. The abandonment (*tayakam*) of a Black Tiger life, for the LTTE cause is not suicide, but a gift of oneself which has Christian nuances. It has now gained popular meaning within the organization and has also appealed to the academics and many others who read and study human and social behavior.

If life is presented and understood as a gift, then its radicalized version to offer that gift as a weapon (*uyirayutham*) to defeat the enemy that causes national calamity is an attractive concept for a person whose life cycle has been victimized. The argument is that the suicide strikers' use of violence against oneself and others abrogates the lofty view of a *tayaki* and *tayagam* (martyr and martyrdom), even if it is for the emancipation of the nation and the creation of a separate state. The counter view is that he/she is a martyr in all its manifestation because it is a representational death, in order to instill fear and terror of death, and finally defeat the enemy.

The strategic self imposed isolation of the LTTE from the main stream politics of Sri Lanka, the Indian political lethargy, the segregation of LTTE by other Tamil parties, international embargoes, the recent ban of the LTTE as a terrorist organization by the European union, freezing of LTTE assets in the West, and the LTTE based conspiracy to bribe the US state department officials to influence the congress to lift the US ban on the movement, have all brought LTTE more sympathy in the Tamil world Diaspora. The *Mavirar* day (Great Heroes Day) celebration has become a Tamil national celebration across the globe. It has provided the movement and the people, a social glue to be reconnected to one another, enhanced their identity and a feeling of a national pride, a sense of a people and a possibility of a nation-state.

Politics of Suicide Strikes

Peter Schalk assertively writes that the LTTE hero is a 'secular' hero⁵. He may be justified in saying that, as the LTTE as an organisation is hardly linked to one single religious

⁵ Peter Schalk "Resistance and Martyrdom in the Process of State Formation of Tamiliam" in *Martyrdom and political Resistance*, ed. Joyce Pettigrew, (Amsterdam: VU Press, 1997) p.75.

persuasion, and does not seem to draw inspiration from any specific popular ideology, but is deeply bent on a single objective of separatism. This astute absolutisation and its objectification provide the rationale which portrays the LTTE to be the sole representative of the Tamil people. It symbolises the radicalisation of its carders to lay down their lives to restore the dignity lost since independence (1948) under the political hegemony of the Sinhala governments.

The politics of Black Tiger suicide also portrays an ideological assault on the politics of state religion of the Sinhala region, and also the Jihadist world that have fractured their own body polity with dissension and balkanisation of traditional internal sociocultural and political arrangements.

Firstly, the LTTE's creation of a blueprint of a secular project for a nation state marginalises the politics of religion to dominate the objective of its self determination and freedom from religiously dominated majority politics of the Sinhala governments since independence. However, the LTTE's ongoing systematic elimination of rival parties and prominent Tamil leadership remains its enemy within.

Secondly, the radicalisation of the image of the homebound, docile Asian woman, through recruitment to form the women Black tiger contingent (as in the case of Dhanu, the woman who assassinated the former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi), close to the core of LTTE operations, portrays a new sense of equality of gender in the formation of the Tamil Eelam. In a speech on International Women's Day 1992, the LTTE leadership reiterated that "the courage and determination and heroism of our women fighters has served to waken their sisters and brothers, break down centuries old social barriers and ways of thinking and behaving and restructure society on a free and equal basis". These two political agendas have brought LTTE's secularity to the forefront, and to name and shame institutions that tend to perpetuate religion and gender as means of domination, rather than solace and equality.

However it must be noted that LTTE on their part fail to obliterate the centuries old psychosocial phenomenon of religiosity, embedded in the Tamil folk psyche with and beyond the Saivite expression of the Hindu worldview (*Weltanschauung*). This seemingly very 'secular' project if enhanced and portrayed as martyrdom through the act of suicide or act of 'gifting' in the LTTE version of *mavirar* (great hero) or Schalk's interpretation as *tiyaki*, in my view, perpetuate a classical combination of 'Hindu and Catholic folk religiosity'⁶. In this sense Roberts' thesis is pragmatic and realistic when he observes that the suicide striker burial rituals and their annual commemorations as having religious language and symbolism.

⁶ According to Roberts, there are 10 ritual days in the annual calendar, among them the 9 April and 26 September in memory of Annai Pupati (mother of ten children) and Tiyaki Theleepan respectively: both fasted unto death. The estimates are that 17,648 fighters are killed out of which 3,766 were women and 13,648 have been men. (I am thankful to Roberts for this information).

Schalk states that LTTE “stipulates that every sepulchre of a dead hero is a seal by which the LTTE confirms its ownership of the land”⁷. The suicide striker for LTTE is a liberation hero (*vitutalai viran*) who is bent on securing independence (*cutantiram*) for the people. The Tamil national social psyche which is predominantly Saivite Hindu and secondarily Catholic is ritually rejuvenated via the burial processes of the martyrs (*mavirars*). They are neither buried nor cremated, but instead are planted as hero stones (*nadukal*) in the sepulchres which become symbolic of the cornerstones for the new land to be born.

This analysis suggests the planting of stones like seeds (*vitai*) which must be resuscitated to continue the struggle. Bidding farewell to co-combatants, handing over mementos, the ‘last meal’ with the leadership is a vivid ritualisation leading to the heroic death (*viramaranarn*) of the great hero (*mavirar*). These special moments appear to reflect rewards in ‘life before death’ rather than an eschatological wish in a ‘life after death’. This militarily designed death, the sense of life and the dream of liberation within the indigenous Tamil community is commemorated in view of an ardent continuity of the ritual death for liberation. What echoes from the inner sanctums of the LTTE to the parents of the suicide strikers is that “your children love the independence of the motherland more than their life. You must feel great and proud of being parents of those who have given these extraordinary beings for a holy aim. Your children have not died; they have become history”⁸. It is in this sense that politics of suicide is closely connected to politics of separatism and the LTTE’s agitation and claim on the present North and East as a traditional Tamil homeland, which irritates and has generated national repugnance and caused the Sinhala nationalist apparatus to fight the LTTE over a period of twenty years, with a loss of nearly 70,000 people, displacing its own citizens into homelessness, abject poverty and misery.

Conclusion

The Tamil Tiger wish for the creation of a separate state and its deployment of suicide, although named as abandonment of life (*tiyagam*), which some tend to identify as Judeo Christian or Jihadist martyrdom underwrites and enlists a sense of reward. This may not be the perception of a Black tiger who both under voluntary and persuasive methods, become a hero appeasing the Tamil nationalist psyche, desiring for separatism on ethnic lines. The representational death of a Black tiger enhances and pontificates the Tamil ethnic roots and heritage as brave, courageous and surpassing

⁷ See *ibid.* Peter Schalk quotation from an LTTE cadre.

⁸ Tamil Tiger leader at the *Mavirar* Day commemoration, 1990, Public address, see (Trans). www.tamilnation.org/ideology/schalkthiyagam.htm (consulted 12 August 2006).

those of the enemy which endows the Tamil public with a sense of heroism and national pride. LTTE by ritualising this hero cult (*mavirar*) strategically has institutionalised the commemoration of the great heroes, who do what they do, without alluding to a reward of heaven (*cuvarkkam*). He/she is a hero of the Tamil Eelam and nothing more and nothing less. Schlak relentlessly tries to separate the LTTE's ideological secularity from being 'religious' but he undermines the ethnic Tamil religiosity which is very much Saivite Hindu and Catholic which determine the parameters of a new cult, within the space provided by the LTTE, where the masses have found meaning and connectedness in times of despair and loss. It is in this sense that new religious meanings have been collated around death and dying, in the name of liberation and suicide, however violent, self destructive and undesirable, within the religious world of the popular masses. LTTE has effectively mobilised this psychosocial vacuum caused by the loss of life and property, meaninglessness under subjugation, hegemony of the majority and the displacement of the poor. Hence resistance, rebellion, and even the use of force and extreme elements are politically justified.

LTTE is not one single organisation, as it represents the fractured manifestations of the Tamil society and reflects the multifaceted grievances of the Tamil people. It has strategically eliminated its rivals that include many politicians, security personnel, and intellectuals on both sides of the conflict. Its elimination praxis has cost its own future and if it were to derive any meaning then it must lie in the building of a nation-state and cannot be like the alleged 'unjust enemy' that it resists. The abandonment of life (*thiyakam*) or suicide may be attractive as long as the enemy is vilified, as internal vilifications are transferred to the 'other' that must be eliminated. The use of violence in the formation of societies is what is intensely problematic as the hungry military machines on both sides of the conflict crave for victory and not compromise, for hegemony and not consensus, for compulsion and not consultation.

Summary

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The article focuses on the 'suicide-martyrdom' deployed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka as a political strategy for self determination and liberation from the 'Sinhala hegemony'. The protagonists have given a new political-

religious meaning to the historically celebrated acts of religious martyrdom, which took place in the name of faith and belief.

Suicide strikers do not believe that the suicide acts they commit are lethal. They are portrayed to be valiant acts of honour and sacrifice on behalf of the family, ethnic community, and more importantly against the 'terrorising other' whose 'acts of violence' must be terminated. It is performed not as an act of violence, but a resolute sacrifice for the sake of compatriots and their freedom.

The author draws some aspects from the research and writings of Peter Schalk and Michael Roberts who have addressed the same subject area on martyrdom as a form of secular resistance, and the latter, on religious aspects in the military formation of a suicide striker and in the aftermath of the mission. He argues that the reconstruction of an astute *faith in suicide* and its ritualisation as a well crafted political tool and as a powerful means to instil fear psychosis in the enemy for the creation of a separate state.

The concept of suicide and the suicide striker within the LTTE with its primary secular political hermeneutic has now embraced a phase of expanding into a notion of patriotic heroism, in the name of statehood of Tamil Eelam bordering on religious-cultural sentiments. This altruistic suicide is linked to liberation of their compatriots from tyranny and injustice which is considered sublime and transcendental even though there is no definitive reward of a paradise as in the case of Jihadist suicide strikers.

The political rhetoric behind the war slogans with religious connotations and statements is socio-political cancer, which has infected many conflict ridden localities across the globe. Sri Lanka remains one example of a majority-minority conflict zone and displays an ardent obstinacy both by the majority and the minority in the conflict, in portraying the 'other' as the sole enemy of the 'self'. They have not only been emulated by the likes of Hamas in the Palestinian campaign against Israeli occupation but also by the Al-Qaeda terror network.

A suicide striker is different to a soldier who goes to the battle field, and is not focused on dying but counterattacking the enemy. The suicide striker kills so that others may live through his or her act of heroism, a devotional sacrifice for the cause of Tamil Eelam. The abandonment of a Black Tiger life is not suicide, but a gift of oneself which has Christian nuances. LTTE hero is a 'secular' hero. However, it must be noted that LTTE on their part fail to obliterate the centuries old psychosocial phenomenon of religiosity, embedded in the Tamil folk psyche with the Hindu worldview. The representational death of a Black tiger enhances and pontificates the Tamil ethnic roots and heritage as brave, courageous and surpassing those of the enemy which endows the Tamil public with a sense of heroism and national pride. He/she is a hero of the Tamil Eelam and nothing more and nothing less.

Schlak relentlessly tries to separate the LTTE's ideological secularity from being 'religious' but he undermines the ethnic Tamil religiosity which is very much Saivite Hindu and Catholic which determine the parameters of a new cult, within the space provided by the LTTE, where the masses have found meaning and connectedness in times of despair and loss. It is in this sense that new religious meanings have been collated around death and dying, in the name of liberation and suicide, however violent, self destructive and undesirable, within the religious world of the popular masses.

Key Words: nationalism, statehood, violence, suicide strikes, martyrdom, Tamil Tigers, Sinhala, Sri Lanka, new religious meaning.

Резиме

Шантикумар Хетиарачи

„МУЧЕНИШТВО“ ТАМИЛСКИХ ТИГРОВА У ШРИ ЛАНКИ – ВЕРА У САМОУБИСТВО РАДИ СТВАРАЊА ДРЖАВЕ

У чланку се разматра питање „мученичких самоубистава“ припадника Тамилских Тигрова у Шри Ланки као облика политичке стратегије у циљу остваривања самоопредељења и ослобођења од „хегемоније Синхалеза“. Протагонисти су дали ново верско–политичко значење историјски слављеним делима мучеништва, које се врши у име вере и верских убеђења.

Самоубице–бомбаши не верују у то да су њихова самоубилачка дела пресудна за битку. Она су представљена као храбра дела ради части и жртвовања за породицу, етничку заједницу или, још значајније, против „терора који други спроводе“, због чега „такви акти насиља“ морају бити заустављени. Самоубилачка дела не представљају, стога, акт насиља, већ акт одлучујућег жртвовања за сународнике и њихову слободу.

Аутор се ослања на неке аспекте истраживања и радова Питера Шлака и Мајкла Робертса, који су се бавили истим питањем мучеништва као облика секуларног отпора или, као Робертс, верским аспектима у току војне обуке самоубица–бомбаша и после извођења њихове мисије. Он указује да учвршћивање вере у самоубиство и њена ритуализација представљају вешто направљено политичко средство и моћно оружје за ширење психозе у редовима непријатеља, у циљу стварања сепаратистичке државе.

Концепт самоубиства и самоубилачких удара међу Тамилским тигровима, са својом примарно секуларном политичком херменаутиком, сада се налазе у фази претварања у појам патриотског хероизма, ослоњеног на верско–културна осећања, у име стварања тамилске државе. Ово алтруистичко самоубиство, повезано са ослобођењем сународника од тираније и неправде, сматра се трансценденталним без обзира на то што за њега не постоји дефинитивна награда у виду живота у рају као што је то случај код џихадистичких бомбаша–самоубица.

Политичка реторика иза ратних поклича са верском конотацијом представља врсту друштвено–политичког канцера, који је захватио многе тензијама оптерећене регионе света. Шри Ланка остаје једна од земаља које носе терет већинско–мањинског сукоба, при чему се онај „други“ увек представља као „једини непријатељ“.

Бомбаш–самоубица разликује се од војника, јер се војник не иде на бојно поље да погине, већ да се бори против непријатеља. Бомбаш–самоубица убија, међутим, да би други могли да живе кроз његов или њен акт хероизма, кроз посвећено жртвовање за стварање Тамилског Елама (државе). Када припадник Црних тигрова „напусти живот“, то није самоубиство већ саможртвовање, са неким хришћанским „примесама“. Тамилски херој је „секуларни“ херој, али чак ни Тамилски тигрови нису успели да потисну вековни психосоциолошки феномен хиндуистичке религиозности, усађен у народни дух Тамила. Смрт Црног тигра представља сакрални чин истицања тамилских етничких корена и историјског наслеђа, што у тамилским масама ствара осећање хероизма и националног поноса.

Аутор наводи да Питер Шлак безуспешно покушава да раздвоји идеолошку секуларност Тамилских Тигрова од религиозности као такве. Али, Шлак превиђа етничку религиозност Тамила изграђену на шаивитском хиндуизму и делимично на католицизму, који одређују оквире једног новог култа. У оквиру тог култа који су створили Тамилски тигрови, тамилске масе налазе, у овом времену очаја и губитака, смисао постојања и припадности. Управо се у том смислу ствара ново верско значење смрти и умирања. Упркос томе што је насилно, самоуништавајуће и непожељно, самоубиство постаје део верског живота широких маса.

Кључне речи: национализам, државност, насиље, самоубилачки удари, мучеништво, Тамилски тигрови, Синхалиези, Шри Ланка, ново верско значење.