

Voices of Displacement: Representing Sri Lankan Refugees in Media

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Abstract

In recent years, mass media has played a crucial role in shedding light on contemporary socio-political issues across the world. Many filmmakers address pressing social concerns through cinema, creating awareness among audiences and encouraging public discourse. Such representations often help draw attention to the problems faced by victims and vulnerable communities, thereby fostering empathy and understanding. Among the many socio-political issues portrayed in contemporary cinema, the refugee crisis remains one of the most persistent and unresolved global challenges. Owing to armed conflicts, ethnic tensions, and the threat of violence, thousands of refugees are forced to flee their homeland. As a result, they experience severe psychological trauma arising from the loss of their homes, property, employment, identity, and access to basic necessities. The Indian Tamil film *Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir* foregrounds the struggles of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees living in India. The title, which translates as “Every place is my hometown, and everyone is my kin,” reflects the refugees’ quest for belonging and highlights the traumatic consequences of the three-decade-long Sri Lankan ethnic conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese. Set against the backdrop of the Sri Lankan Civil War and the subsequent refugee exodus, the film explores issues such as violence, identity crises, ethnic discrimination, forced displacement, psychological trauma, border-control challenges, suspicion of terrorism, and the difficulties involved in obtaining refugee status. Through its powerful narrative, the film serves as a poignant commentary on the complex challenges faced by refugees in the contemporary world and underscores the urgent need for compassion, justice, and social inclusion.

Keywords: refugee problems, mass media, civil war, and identity issues

1. Introduction

Renowned Indian film director Mani Ratnam often addresses socio-political issues in his films. He utilizes mass media as a powerful tool to bring attention to create awareness about various social concerns. His notable movie, *Kannathil Muthamittal* (2002) set the backdrop of the Sri Lankan civil war, refugee problems, and the evil of terrorism. Ritwik Ghatak, the prominent Indian filmmaker, uses the media as a tool to educate people by creating public awareness of social issues. He said about cinema that, “I am not an artiste, nor am I a cinema artiste. Cinema is not an art form to me. It is only a means to the end of serving my people” (Meghe Dhaka Tara, 1960, n.d.). His award-winning movie, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960) deals with the trauma and tragic life of the protagonist Neeta, a middle-class refugee living with her family in Calcutta.

Often, films are described as the entertainment cum education tool and mirror of the society. Revolutionary and social awareness genre movies raise the voices of the voiceless people. It provides the malevolence of social acts and the importance of humanity. The chosen film, *Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir* was written and directed by Venkata Krishna Roghanth. The Indian Tamil movie was released in 2023; it covers the identity problems and trauma of the refugees. The title of the movie, *Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir* is adapted from the Tamil poem, *Purananuru* (verse – 192) written by Kaniyan Poongundranar. The Tamil Sangam poet, Kaniyan Poongundranar wrote this poem in the 6th century (Ettuthokai – Purananuru 1-200, 2014).

In recent decades, the title or term ‘Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir’ gained popularity through G. Ponnambalam and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. In 1966, G. Ponnambalam, a Sri Lankan politician and lawyer used this quote in his sermon at the 21st session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (Bharathi, 2021). In 2015, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam quoted the line on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee year of the European Parliament. He stated “I’m remainder of

the dream of Indian poet 'Kaniyan Pungundranar' who articulated 3000 years back in Tamil Classic Purananuru he says 'Yaadhum Oorae Yaavarum Kaeleer' which means 'I'm a world citizen, every citizen is my kith and kin' (Abdul Kalam's Speech in European Union - Yaadhum Oorae Yaavarum Kaeleer, n.d., July 2015).

The protagonist of the film is Punithan, a Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seeker in India. He lost his entire family in a riot during the Sri Lankan civil war and was subsequently forced to leave the island due to fear and the threat to his life. In the host country, he concealed his original name and led a double life under the name Kirubanadhi to avoid identity problems. His actual goal is to claim refugee status and showcase his musical talents on the world stage. However, due to his lack of social identity, he encountered various issues in the process of achieving his goal.

Punithan was traumatized by the war in his homeland and faced intense stress while seeking refugee status and citizenship. He was born and raised in the island's northern region, which is the center of the conflict area. The loss of his parents and the prolonged conflicts on the island left him deeply traumatized. Struggling to prove his talents without any personal or social identity, his role was designed to represent and amplify the voices of the voiceless people.

2. Literature Review

Abhishek Ghosal's (2019), examines the consequences of Sri Lankan conflict by focusing on relationship between love, political reconciliation, and ethnic tensions. The study deals with the interpersonal relationships can acquire political significance and potentially contribute to reduce tensions between ethnic communities (Ghosal, 2019). The research paper, "Crossing Boundaries in Search of Hope and Love Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea - A Traumatic Journey*", focusing on the traumatic consequences of displacement, including loss of homeland and family relationships (Babu, 2022).

Rubaraj (2021) examines the experiences of Sri Lankan refugees, particularly their uncertain situation between their homeland and host country. The study also discusses challenges faced by asylum seekers in the host countries. Dinakaran and Mukerjee (2023), in their study "Interpreting Buddhism's Core Values in the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict: An Analysis of Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief Marriage*", examine the role of Buddhist values in conflict-affected regions and highlight the importance of non-violence, peace, and humanitarian values.

Van Herk (2021) explores refugee vulnerability through literary representations of displacement, focusing on the effects of climate change, helplessness, alienation, and family separation. Sharma (2020), in the research paper "The Politics of 'Bare Life' in Sharon Bala's *The Boat People*" examines the struggles of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Canada from a bio-political perspective, particularly their trauma and uncertain situations in host countries. Together, these studies highlight the complex social and environmental factors that shape refugee experiences.

3. Research Gap and Research Questions

The mentioned research works focused on issues faced by refugees including refugee outflux, post-traumatic stress disorder, the politicization and plasticity of love, the intermediate state of refugees, and the alienation experienced by Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. This study aims to unravel the identity and ethnic crises faced by refugees in both host and home lands, shedding light on the trauma of war with the assistance of media. It attempts to address the subsequent questions,

1. Exploring the causes and effects of three decades of civil conflict in Sri Lanka
2. Unveiling identity and ethnic-related challenges faced by refugees
3. Examining the trauma experienced by refugees as a result of war.

4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to delve into the complex and nuanced social themes associated with refugee experiences. Qualitative methods are deemed suitable for capturing the multifaceted nature of refugee outflux, crises, identity issues, alienation, and discrimination-related problems. The selected film, *Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir*, was chosen based on its direct relevance to the experiences of Sri Lankan refugees and forcibly displaced communities. The film addresses issues associated with displacement, identity, and the socio-political and cultural challenges faced by the displaced communities in their homeland and host countries. The selected characters, scenes, themes, dialogues, and narratives were identified and analyzed in relation to trauma theory. Then the themes were carefully interpreted with the War Trauma to examine the traumatic experiences represented in the film. Theory and thematic analysis are applied in the qualitative study. Trauma theory serves as a guiding framework for critically analyzing and interpreting the traumatic experiences of refugees. The study critically examines the themes of forced displacement, memory, discrimination, alienation, marginalization, resettlement, and identity. The mentioned themes are critically interpreted through the theories of War Trauma and Economic Trauma experienced by the refugees. The

selected theoretical frameworks are applied to the Sri Lankan victims of the war. The refugees' traumatic experiences include loss of family members, physical disabilities, economic hardships, the sudden loss of possessions, psychological distress, and the pressures of resettlement, as represented in the selected film.

5. Background of the Sri Lankan Civil War

Sri Lanka is one of the multi-ethnic identity nations, Jayawardena pointed out the statistical report of the Sri Lankan ethnic and religious population, "Sri Lanka is a multicultural, multi-ethnic and a multi-religious country with 74.9% Sinhalese (majority ethnic group), 11.2% Tamils, 4.1% Indian Tamils, 9.3% Moor and 0.5% others" (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012). While the island boasts a wealth of heritage, a vibrant culture, picturesque beaches, and numerous stunning attractions, it has also been marked by numerous conflicts throughout its history. The primary tensions, arising between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Sri Lankan Tamils, can be attributed to various socio-political factors. This recurring cycle of violence and conflicts resulted in five decades of forced displacements in Sri Lanka, occurring between 1983 and 2009 (Jayawardena, 2020).

The root cause of the civil war was the implementation of political acts that adversely affected the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The first controversial political law was the 'Ceylon Citizenship Act (1948)' which restricted the citizenship rights of the Sri Lankan Tamils, "when all these applications were processed by November 1964, only 140,185 persons (or 13% of Estate Tamils) had been accepted as citizens by registration and 975,000 remained stateless" (Shastri, 1999, p. 80). The second controversial act known as the 'Sinhala Only Act (1956)', "Section 2 of the Act declared simply and devastatingly: "The Sinhala language shall be the one official language of Ceylon" (Venugopal, 2022, p. 10). The third controversial act was, 'The Policy of Standardisation Act (1971)', which resulted in thousands of Sri Lankan Tamil students who were unable to enter the medical and engineering colleges due to favouring the Sinhala students alone.

K. M. de Silva (*Were Tamils Squeezed Out of Higher Education by Standardisation? — Sri Lanka Education Forum — Catalyzing Policy Reforms*, 2007) referred to the policy of Standardization act as biased because the admission criteria for medical faculties set the qualifying mark at 250 (out of 400) for Tamil students, while it was only 229 for Sinhalese students. "Policies such as the Citizenship Act, Sinhala only Act, land policies, university admission policies hurting the minorities. This led them to believe that they are being alienated from mainstream politics and putting their culture on the line of absolute neglect" (Fazil & Fowsar, 2020, p. 147).

6. Challenges Associated with Refugees

Refugees are forced to be displaced from their motherland. They often seek asylum or shelter in an alien nation due to violence and natural disasters. The UNHCR report stated that "At least 100 million people were forced to flee their homes during the last 10 years, seeking refuge either within or outside the borders of their country" (UNHCR - UNHCR Global Trends 2019, 2022). Refugees often seek citizenship and other fundamental requirements in the host country, "refugee status is officially recognized, once a person is fearful of being persecuted is beyond the borders of his/her country of residence and terminates, once they have repatriated or become a resident of another country" (Shultz et al., 2020, p. 130). In the book, *Mental Health Among Displaced People and Refugees: Making the Case for Action at the World Bank Group*, Marquez (2017) discusses the three phases of refugees; 1. pre-flight, 2. flight, and 3. post-flight. In the 'pre-flight phase', refugees encountered violence, wounds, loss of organs, loss of possessions, and loss of family members. In the second phase (flight phase), the refugees make a dangerous journey, resettlement problems, border control issues, and problems related to being suspected of terrorism. In the 'post-flight phase' the refugees' common problems are cultural, community, language, climate, and economic related issues. The forcibly displaced people often seek shelter, peace, and other humanitarian assistance. For example, during the Syrian war, the uprooted people were given humanitarian assistance by Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel. Refugees encounter difficulties when attempting to return to their motherland, "Typically, refugees travel to a refugee camp in a country of first asylum and register themselves for refugee status. Refugees fall under the protection of the UNHCR" (McBrien, 2017, p. 116).

The host countries justify their actions as a means to regulate foreign populations, curb illegal migration, argue that close borders could maintain the stable GDP of the country, etc. The ethnic identities played a vital role in the conflict between the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils in the island. Sri Lankan Tamils were marginalized and often treated as strangers in their own land, despite Tamil peoples claiming themselves to be indigenous people, "discrimination had definitely induced anger, frustration and estranged feelings among refugee youth" (Chan, 2011, p. 81). The condition of being stateless is widespread. Identity Problems of Refugees

Identity plays a pivotal role in every individual's life and refugees often understand its significance. Refugees experienced high stress and emotional distress due to the absence of a social identity, contributing significantly to their overall trauma. Stripped of their familiar surroundings and displaced from their homes, refugees grappled with a profound sense of loss, not only in terms of physical spaces but also in the erosion of their identities. The trauma

stemmed from the abrupt severance of ties to their cultural roots, familial bonds, and a stable sense of self. Asylum seekers and refugees are often discriminated against of social identity, leading to feelings of frustration, anxiety, trauma, alienation, language barriers, cultural clashes, and fear, “The terms “migrant,” “refugee,” and “asylum seeker” have become increasingly politicized” (McBrien, 2017, p. 115). On the other end, identity helps in cultural and social integration, “Culture takes on this pivotal position not only because of its intrinsic significance, but precisely because it has become so bound up with the most fundamental questions of human identity in its many dimensions: personal, ethnic, religious, social and national” (Lieber & Weisberg, 2002, p. 275).

The actual purpose of the identity is to unite people and not to differentiate and separate from other groups. Breaking the identity bias contributes to fostering kindness among the different groups, “Tagore’s idea of a dialogic community of differences gets further justified when we find a modern thinker like Derrida, thinking on a similar line of ‘nation without nation’ or ‘identity without identity’ based on ‘hospitality’ and welcoming of the Other” (Tuteja & Chakraborty, 2017, p. 182). Over the past decades, people have used the term ‘identity’ to differentiate other groups, which led to several violent actions, “Reflective of this crisis is a widespread reckoning with the historically subjugated identities of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other subordinated social categories and groupings” (Dunn, 1998, p. 4).

7. Sri Lankan Civil Conflict and Refugee Problems in V. K. Roghanth’s *Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir*

Refugees often experience violence and persecution which can cause their psychological trauma. The emotional distresses of war, natural disasters, physical and mental abuse in the war regions intensifies the refugee’s trauma. The term ‘trauma’ originates from the Greek word for ‘wound,’ referring to an internal injury or distress. Coined and elaborated upon by Sigmund Freud in 1960, the concept involves internal emotional suffering. According to the APA definition, “trauma is an event that involves actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence” (Smid, 2023, p. 97).

Engaging in armed conflicts is the least efficient method for resolving any issue. Director Venkata Krishna Roghanth underscored these words at the beginning of the movie *Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir*, “there could be a hundred reasons to initiate a war. But it is always hard to find one to stop it...” (Roghanth, V. K., 2023, 0:02:12). In the narration of the opening scene depicted, Punithan articulates a series of questions and ambiguous answers that have haunted his mind, “Why this world was created? Came to my mind when I was 3 years old. Because I saw people always fighting with each- other” (0:02:37). He was baffled about why people consistently engaged in conflict with each other. Throughout the day, he could hear the gunfire and bombing sounds from his vicinity, causing him significant fear and anxiety, “An event traumatizes a collectivity because it is “an extraordinary event,” an event that has such “an explosive quality” that it creates “disruption” and “radical change . . . within a short period of time” (Alexander, 2012, p. 8). The opening scene depicts Punithan’s early exposure to violence and his sense of uncertainty in the war-torn area illustrating the experience of individual trauma. The persistent fear for his life reflects the psychological disruption experienced by the individuals in the conflict-affected environments.

In his early years, Punithan discovered that the island’s residents were consistently embroiled in disputes over both land and power politics. He began questioning the logic behind these conflicts, “What’s the purpose of the land? I was told, it was for living. Why can’t everyone live together? They said, it was their land. I asked, For how long? To date, I haven’t got a clear answer” (0:02:58). He stressed his statement that animals are the actual inhabitants of the world, later humans came and colonized the lands. Then people formed many groups, territories, leaders, laws, and regulations to protect them. In the process of safeguarding people and nations, they started to kill other groups and identities, “When I asked why were territories formed? I was told to protect people” (0:03:44). He felt perplexed because territories were supposed to be created for people’s protection, yet there was a paradoxical situation where people were fighting to establish new territories and, concurrently, to safeguard existing ones. The paradox reveals how the formation of territories, ethnic identities, laws, and political structures, which were initially intended to organize and protect communities, could also contribute to separation, conflict, and the emergence of terrorism.

Punithan strongly believes that the world is a temporary dwelling for humans, and he advocates for peaceful coexistence rather than conflict and harm one to another. The inhumane and violent actions he witnessed since childhood days led to a fear of living an everyday life, “When social groups do construe events as gravely endangering, suffering becomes a matter of collective concern, cultural worry, social panic, gut-wrenching fear, catastrophic anxiety” (Alexander, 2012, p. 3). In the case of Sri Lanka, *Eelam* Tamils sought to form a new territory and own government through arms against the Sinhala government, which led to three decades of conflict on the island. As a result, thousands of individuals who were not directly involved in the conflict became victims and were adversely affected, “When bad things happen to good people, they become shocked, outraged, indignant” (p. 8). Additionally, the conflict resulted in the forced displacement of numerous people, “The scale and scope of challenges and threats faced by FDP are enormous. They are exposed to unpredictable and disastrous environments during forced migrations and (re)settlements” (Shultz et al., 2020, p. 129).

The refugees' fear, anxiety, and prolonged insecurity reflect the collective suffering caused by conflict and displacement, as represented through Punithan's experience.

In a war-torn area, a local church father rescues Punithan on the island. The pastor discovers that Punithan, to cope with the sounds of bombs and gunfire, used to create rhythms and sounds with sticks and play on boxes. "During my childhood, I used to play random musical instruments to escape the noise of the blasts and gunshots (0:51:00). This scene illustrates how prolonged exposure to violence shaped Punithan's psychological response to trauma. This experience reflects the intense uncertainty and insecurity faced by refugees. He used the rhythmic sounds as a coping mechanism to escape the traumatic noises. "Refugees must manage intense uncertainty and insecurity, having little time to process traumatic experiences before they must respond to myriad challenges in their adopted home" (Kuttikat et al., 2018).

Recognizing Punithan's musical talent, the pastor feels that it would be unjust to raise him as an ordinary individual amid conflict. Consequently, the pastor decides to send Punithan to London, "No idea when there will be a bomb blast. There is no guarantee for life. 'I'm happy to send you to London to save you and your music' (Roghanth, V. K., 2023, 0:52:55). However, Punithan and his fellow migrants are apprehended by the Sri Lankan border control authorities. Tragically, two suspected Tamil migrants were killed and the remaining six were imprisoned including Punithan. In prison, Punithan pleads with the police. "Please open the door. I need to go to London" (0:054:26). He pleads with police incessantly, emphasizing that he is a victim of the war and has had no involvement in any terrorist activities. His plea reveals that physical escape from the war zone does not provide freedom and security, as his movement and aspirations remain restricted even after displacement. The imprisonment further intensifies his psychological trauma. Hathaway highlighted in his article, *A Global Solution to a Global Refugee Crisis* about the imprisoned ratio and crisis of refugees, "One in four refugees in the world is effectively imprisoned, and at least as many are often subject to serious restrictions on their mobility" (Hathaway, 2016, p. 94). As a result of the prolonged effects of the war, Punithan experiences a sense of insecurity and psychological distress due to imprisonment and restricted mobility. Dinakaran and Mukherjee (2023) state that "The forcefully uprooted people, often seek refuge in search of peace or to get humanitarian assistance from other countries" (P. 523).

Punithan experienced a profound sense of alienation and fell into depression after leaving. He faced mistreatment based on his identity and ethnicity in Sri Lanka. Driven by intense stress, he tried to leave the island. In the host country, he concealed his identity and lived a double life. Regrettably, he persisted in facing mistreatment from different public officials and individuals because of his identity. He encountered challenges in showcasing his musical talent and securing a suitable job, "Finding employment is very difficult for the refugees in both of the camps even if they are educated and qualified... The situation is worse for women compared to men" (Valatheeswaran & Rajan, 2011, pp. 12–13). Refugees are compelled to leave their homeland, and it is evident that they are unable to bring all their belongings and assets with them. As they start anew in their resettlement, their economic limitations contribute to additional challenges and distress in the host countries, "the economic aspect of anxiety as a central fact of the trauma" (Bohleber, 2010, p. 95). Punithan's experiences therefore reflect the broader socio-economic and psychological challenges faced by the refugees.

Matilda and Kannigai became suspicious of Punithan because they believed he was living a double life under the names of Punithan and Kirubakaran. Punithan then opened up to them about his traumatic childhood experiences in the war-torn nation, "I don't know who are my parents, siblings, and relatives. I was told that a local church father rescued me in a mid-conflict area" (Roghanth, V. K., 2023, 0:51:00). Punithan reveals the myriad challenges that he encountered in Sri Lanka. According to George, violence is the core cause of psychological stress, "Experiences of ill health, loss, and bereavement and violence have resulted in psychological distress among Sri Lankan Tamil refugees" (George, 2013, 171). The loss of family members in the war-torn regions can cause long term trauma of the refugees.

Director Roghanth elucidated the hardships encountered by refugees in the host country, stemming from their absence of identity and nationality. Punithan, seeking asylum in the host land to claim refugee status, faces a significant hurdle due to his lack of identity. Refugees experience frustration in obtaining educational degrees because they are unable to secure employment, despite being educated, "We may have all qualifications, but when employers see 'refugee' on the application form, we don't get the job" (Kuttikat et al., 2018). If the refugees wanted to reach any other districts within the state, they had to undertake a police station for reporting. The suspicious scrutiny and inhumane acts towards refugees add to their existing turmoil. They were imprisoned on account of numerous false allegations, "However, no empirical evidence that refugees present a greater threat of crime or violence than do the many other non-citizens routinely crossing borders, or indeed those already resident in the State, including citizens" (Hathaway, 2016, p. 95). The film effectively portrays the identity issues, employment barriers, restricted mobility, and suspicion of terrorism contribute to the marginalization experienced by the refugees in the host country.

At a particular moment, Punithan discovered himself among the finalists of the Royal Music Academy competition

in London, alongside one of his fellow contestants. When the academy crew learned that Punithan was a stateless person facing difficulties in obtaining a passport, they appealed to the host country's government to issue him a special one-time passport. Ultimately, under the alias Kirubanadhi, he acquired the government identification certificates and arrived in London. On the stage, he utilized the opportunity to bring attention to refugee issues, share his experiences of war trauma, recount the ill-treatment in the host country, and shed light on the enduring crises they faced. His speech is for people across the world, who are traumatized by war, fighting for their basic rights and needs. He began his speech with a few questions, "What is self-respect? What is privilege? Only the people who are deceived by it will understand its importance" (Roghanth, V. K., 2023, 1:47:10). He pleaded people worldwide to kindly take notice of the plight of refugees, as they are in distress, separated from their family, friends, and loved ones without a way to escape. "You may have been born at any corner of the world but this earth was created for all of us to stay united. But all of us discriminated us, based on race, language, and nation" (1:48:22). Punithan's speech highlights how discrimination based on identity, language, and nationality contributes to the separation and insecurity experienced by the refugees.

The displaced individuals underwent both physical and mental alienation. Punithan elucidated the process of a citizen transforming into a refugee and the accompanying stress of losing fundamental rights, "This earth was created for all of us to stay united. But all of us are separated on the basis of race, language, nation, and borders... Any factor that separated human beings, when equal rights and opportunities are stripped off, a section of people are turned into refugees" (Roghanth, V. K., 2023, 1:49:09). The sudden forced displacement of the civilians led to ruins of refugee future, "The unforeseen and unexpected future altogether ruins the life of refugees day by day. The only things that every refugee expects are a respectful life in this land" (Vigetharan & Subramanian, p. 38). The actual purpose of the borders is to separate or differentiate the nations for regional purposes instead of fighting with each other, "All place is my place. All the people are my relatives. From the side of the people who have accepted this notion, I place this as a request to the people who do not accept this notion" (Roghanth, V. K., 2023, 1:49:43). The perspective highlights the importance of unity, cultural identity, equality, and fraternity while challenging divisions between communities based on national borders.

The movie explores the challenges faced by refugees through the experiences of the protagonist, Punithan. Raised in a conflict-ridden region, he is unjustly sent to prison, forcibly displaced from his homeland, and ends up in a refugee camp. Throughout his journey, Punithan encounters obstacles in obtaining refugee status, grapples with identity issues, struggles to showcase his hidden talents, and faces discrimination in both his home and host nations, all of which contribute to his trauma.

The film sheds light on the often-overlooked talents of refugees, highlighting issues such as unemployment and economic crises that exacerbate their struggles. Mass media plays a crucial role in bringing attention to refugee problems, ultimately contributing to the trauma prevalent in contemporary life. By showcasing these issues, the media helps raise awareness at a national level, prompting officials and the public to address the challenges refugees face. This, in turn, can lead to the implementation of relevant laws and solutions, as well as a shift in public perception towards treating refugees with equality and empathy.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

In Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese and Tamil communities engaged in conflict to assert dominance over territory and power, impacting individuals like Punithan. Thousands of individuals lost their parents, homeland, properties, and friends, and subsequent upheaval in the host country contributed to the traumatic experiences of the refugees. The number of casualties and injuries may vary on both sides, but both ethnic groups suffered significant consequences. Fernando stated any form of violence is not ethically justified "Violence has been committed by the government and the various Tamil militant groups. There is no moral hierarchy of violence and discrimination, and two wrongs do not make a right." (Fernando, 2015, p. 302).

Beyond Sri Lanka, several nations are currently entangled in civil wars and identity conflicts. Each day, numerous individuals seek refuge either in neighboring countries or internally uproot themselves to escape violence and pursue a life of peace. The primary aspiration of refugees is to attain a peaceful existence. Individuals, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must pay close attention to the challenges faced by these refugees and work collectively to address and alleviate their problems. Many humanitarian organizations work hard for the welfare of the refugees and solve their ongoing crises, the notable organizations are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO). National and international laws and NGOs taking many steps related to refugee protection, but still, many of their problems go unnoticed and unrecognized.

The research paper proposing the recommendations of the possible resolutions for the ongoing refugee problems are,

The concerned officials must implement laws and regulations to prevent world wars, identity clashes, and civil conflicts, thereby saving thousands of innocent individuals who are not involved in the conflicts.

The host countries should address the border closure issues, terror suspects problems, discrimination matters of the refugees, and identity-related problems.

The government would take immediate action on asylum seekers and refugees' certificate verification, status determination, resettlement, rehabilitation, ensuring their basic needs, and sorting their socio-cultural issues.

The home and host nations should give importance to the refugees' education, skills, recognition, and employment. Such support can improve their economic conditions and fulfill their basic needs.

Implementing the aforementioned suggestions could contribute significantly to managing refugee issues. While many Sri Lankan refugees who have reached countries such as India, Canada, and America are benefiting from extensive welfare programs, their current unmet expectations revolve around gaining a distinct 'identity' and the 'freedom of movement.' If the government addresses these aspects, it could enhance the refugees' well-being and make their contributions more impactful.

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Author contributions

Dr. Dinakaran S conceptualized the research, developed the central research idea, and prepared the manuscript. Dr. G. Anburaj contributed to the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data and the development of the theoretical framework. Dr. G. Christopher contributed to proofreading, critical revision, and refinement of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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