

ERA 1  
PART 1



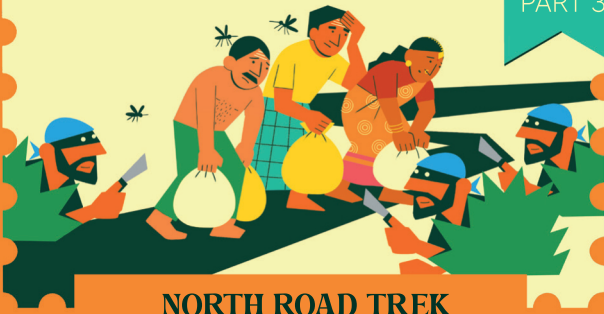
THE ROOTS OF OPPRESSION

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THE OCEAN CROSSING

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NORTH ROAD TREK

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FIRST PLANTATION SETTLEMENTS

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COMMUNITY FORMATION

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PLANTATION RAJ – THE COLONIAL  
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LIFE IN THE LINE ROOMS

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LABOR CONTROL AND RESISTANCE

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EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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THE FIRST REPATRIATION  
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PART 2

**PLANTATION MANAGEMENT  
CHANGE**



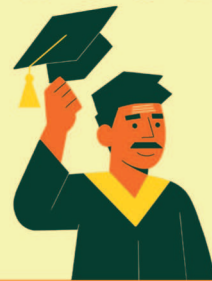
**ERA 4**  
PART 3

**UNION POWER AND  
LABOR RIGHTS**



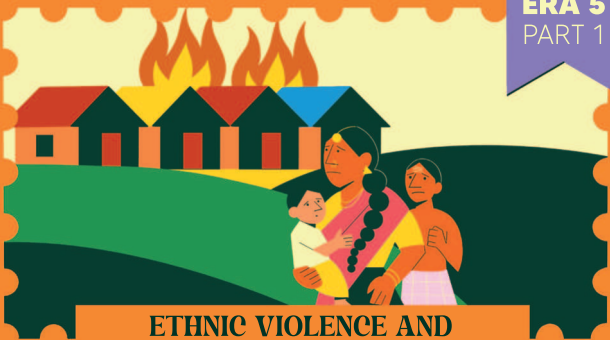
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**HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS  
STRUGGLES**



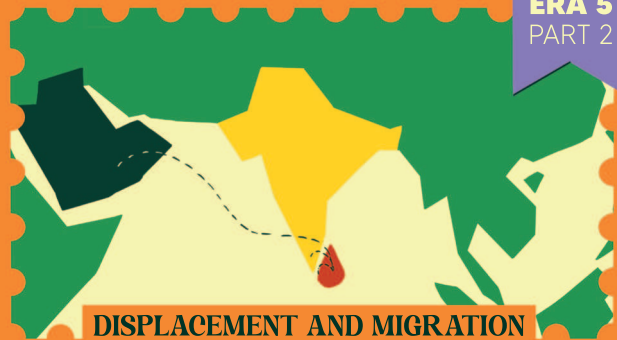
**ERA 4**  
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**EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND  
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**ERA 5**  
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**ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND  
TARGETED ATTACKS**



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**DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION  
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**CAUGHT IN THE  
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**ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION  
AND PRIVATIZATION**

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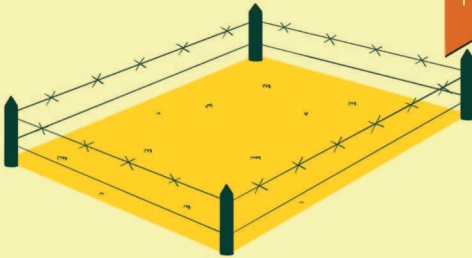
**CITIZENSHIP RESOLUTION AND  
POLITICAL REINTEGRATION**

**ERA 6**  
PART 1



**POST-WAR RECONCILIATION  
AND JUSTICE**

**ERA 6**  
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**LAND RIGHTS AND HOUSING  
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**ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND  
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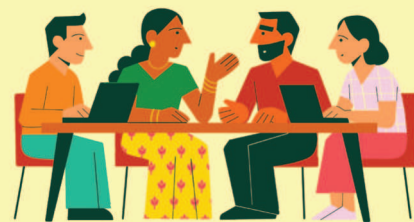


**POLITICAL REPRESENTATION  
AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**ERA 6**  
PART 5



**CULTURAL RENAISSANCE AND  
IDENTITY AFFIRMATION**



**ERA 6  
PART 1**

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### **BEAUTIFUL FUTURE: PART 2**

Visualize a local economy in the future that values care, fairness, and dignity, especially for those from historically marginalized communities like plantation workers. What kinds of opportunities exist for young people?

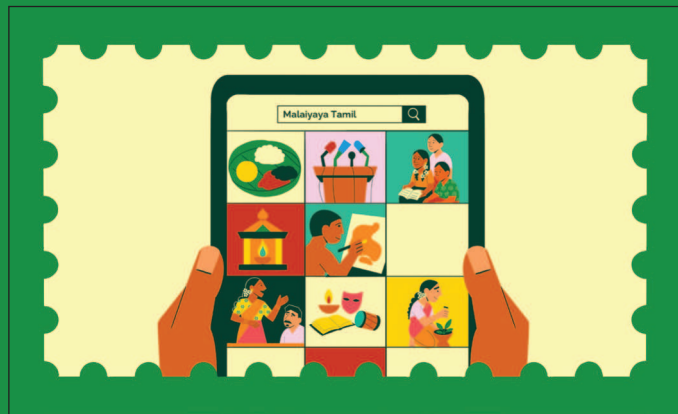
What do workspaces, training centers, or cooperatives look like? How do people share resources, knowledge, and wealth? What role could you play in shaping this economy?

### **BEAUTIFUL FUTURE: PART 1**

Imagine a future where schools and public spaces work together to tell the full, honest stories of all communities, including Malaiyaga Tamil people. What does a classroom look like where empathy, solidarity, and historical truth are central to learning?

What kinds of public memorials or commemorative events exist in your community that help people reflect, remember, and move forward together? How do these spaces connect learning, healing, and justice?





**BEAUTIFUL FUTURE: PART 4**

Picture a world where political voice is not limited to voting but woven into everyday life. How do people from all backgrounds, regardless of class, language, or location, participate in shaping policies and decisions?

What spaces or systems help ensure everyone is heard and valued? What makes you feel politically included in this future?

**BEAUTIFUL FUTURE: PART 3**

Imagine a future where climate action protects both the environment and the people who live and work on it, including those in plantation and rural communities. What kinds of farming or land-use practices exist?

How are workers cared for in times of drought, heat, or floods? What role do you play in linking local struggles for justice with broader environmental movements?

**CEYLON TEA: GLOBAL BRAND BUILDER**

The meticulous tea plucking techniques perfected by Malaiyaga Tamil workers created Ceylon Tea's global reputation for quality.

By 2017, when Sri Lanka celebrated 150 years of Ceylon Tea, the industry they built had become the country's largest employer and second-largest export, generating billions in revenue.

**BEAUTIFUL FUTURE: PART 5**

Think of a future where Malaiyaga Tamil cultural expressions, from traditional arts to modern media, are fully valued alongside all other forms of creativity. What stories, performances, or digital content are being shared?

Who tells them, and who listens? How do these expressions challenge stereotypes and build shared understanding? How do you support or create this space?

**KOVIL TRADITIONS AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY**

The plantation Kovil festivals, particularly Thai Pongal and Mariamman Theru (chariot) festivals worship traditions, developed unique Sri Lankan characteristics over generations.

Many estates saw Sinhalese Buddhist neighbors participating in these celebrations, creating intercommunity and interfaith bonds through shared spiritual experiences embracing diversity and common humanity.

**HIGHLAND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPERS**

The railway network extending to Nuwara Eliya and other highland areas, built and maintained through Malaiyaga Tamil labor since the 1870s, opened up previously inaccessible regions for development.

This infrastructure network continues to serve all communities and supports the tourism industry that would later become a major economic sector.

**RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE: DRUMMING AND DANCE**

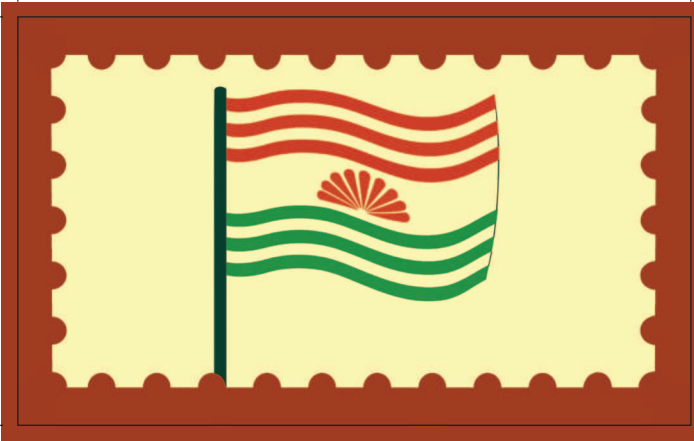
The rhythmic patterns of the Parai drum and the athletic movements of the Karagam dance were preserved and adapted on the plantations, developing distinct Sri Lankan variations. While Kummi dances were practiced as a cultural expression of identity, Kavadi dances were offerings to gods with a deep spiritual meaning.

Additionally, the Kooththu performances carried out a form of storytelling that inspired community theatre and drama. These art forms not only maintained cultural identity but also influenced broader Sri Lankan performance traditions, particularly in central highland regions.

**CULINARY HERITAGE: BEYOND THE PLANTATION**

The distinctive vegetarian cooking traditions developed in plantation communities—featuring techniques for preparing root vegetables in the cool highlands and creating spice blends using locally available ingredients—gradually influenced surrounding communities.

Dishes like 'estate potato curry' and specific dhal preparation methods were adopted into mainstream Sri Lankan cuisine.



### WOMEN'S LABOR LEADERSHIP

Women plantation workers pioneered female labor activism in Sri Lanka through their central role in tea production and participation in strikes and negotiations.

Their collective actions helped establish maternity benefits, protections against harassment, and recognition of women's labor value that would later benefit women workers across all sectors and communities.

### TRADE UNION PIONEERS

The formation of the Ceylon Indian Congress (later Ceylon Workers' Congress) in 1939 by Malaiyaga Tamil leaders Peri Sundaram and G. R. Motha can be seen as a pioneering labor organizing movement in the history of Sri Lanka. Their organizing models were later adopted by workers throughout Sri Lanka.

Their persistent campaigns for basic rights like maternity leave, maximum working hours, and injury compensation set standards eventually extended to all Sri Lankan workers.



