

Yes, I am Tamil!

When Weerasena¹ was interdicted
And the sun was on fire
Above the textile factory
Shouting slogans
Screaming hoarsely
Brother Nadesan²
At the flaming pickets
I was a Tamil

When Weere³ got the job back
Riding on the shoulders
“Long live brother Nade²....!”
The victorious king
In the victory parade
I was a Tamil

When Siripala¹ was shot
By the squad breaking the strike
Took him in my own hands
And flew to the hospital
I was a Tamil

Both hands punctured
With saline tubes
“Nade, you are my savior”
Sira⁴, you embraced me sobbing
I was a Tamil.

When Kusum¹ was pregnant
And dying on a hospital bed
They never demanded
Sinhalese blood
But just “O” negative
Only I happened to have
I was a Tamil.
“Son, you belong to uncle Nade”
the newborn
Was put in my hands
With tears flowing
Yet, I was a Tamil.

Weere, I hear your slogan
Suppressing the shouting
At the picket line
“Slay the Tamils! Give us the peace!”
“Give us the peace! Slay the Tamils!”

1. Weerasena, Siripala and Kusum are Sinhalese names.
2. Nade is a short form of a Tamil name(Nadesan).
3. Weere is the short form of Weerasena.
4. Sira is the short form of Siripala.

Sira, there's no hospital here
Only a collapsed heap of bricks
Crushed into pieces
With heartless shelling

Kusum,
Oh! dear Kusum,
If you can see the flow of 'O' negative today
How I've drenched myself in it
Too much to get absorbed
in to this parched earth...

In the graveyard of my race
Where, all our sons
And grandsons were slaughtered
Here I'm struggling all alone
to gasp at my last breath
Yes,
I AM Tamil!

Mahesh Munasinghe: “Mama Demala” (“මම දෙමළ”)

[Translated By: Malathie Kalpana Ambrose / Ransirimal Fernando]

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