Nonviolence Response to Ethnic Conflicts: The Case of Muslims in Sri Lanka

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DECLARATION

I do declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another diploma or degree at any university or other institution of tertiary education. This thesis was prepared for Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Studies under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Øivind Fuglerud, University of Oslo. All information taken from the published or unpublished work of others have duly been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is shown.

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ABSTRACT

The reinterpretation of Islamic fundamental values led to radicalization of the Sinhala Ethnocratic nationalism by well-established radical Sinhala Buddhist organizations such as Sihala Rawaya, Rawana Balaya and *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) in Sri Lanka. Among these groups, BBS extremely reacted to the recently emerged culturally changing behaviour of the Muslim community. Issuance of halal certificates, wearing clothes in the way of covering face and the head, increasing mosques, emergence and spread of *Wahhabism* and the increasing bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie among Muslims are the mainly identified issues which were addressed publicly by the BBS and other Sinhala ethno-nationalist organizations against the Muslims. The objective of the research was to examine factors that lead to majority violence against minority ethnic Muslims and investigate the outcome of nonviolence approach of Muslims towards conflicts and riots. Twenty four randomly selected and targeted in-depth interviews including scholars provided the necessary qualitative data for the content analysis. The research found that there are many factors causing the tension between a few extremist's groups of both Majority Sinhalese and Minority Muslims as well as for nonviolence response. It is apparent that the Muslim community has chosen to respond nonviolently to the violent attacks made against them by the Sinhala majority. This is due to their own religious background, which emphasizes compassion and love, and their minority status. As a minority, they do not have the same clout that the majority does and this plays a role in their decision to employ nonviolence. Also, given their political leadership and religious leadership, the Muslim community is much more prone to choosing a nonviolent approach. However, this is not out of mere passivity but out of a calculated and educated understanding of how politics work in the country and what works best for the community without aggravating conditions. Serious policy implications arise from the findings which require immediate attention of political leaders and policy makers of the country.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1   Background

Sri Lanka is a country where people are deeply divided. Sinhalese, Tamils and the Muslims are the major ethnic communities in this country. Sinhalese community is the majority, Tamils are the main minority representing 11% of the total population of the country. Muslims are a minority ethnic group contributing 9% of the total population of 21.7 million people. According to the 2011 Sri Lanka Census Department Statistics, Buddhism is the religion of more than 70% of the population practicing while 13% of the population practicing Hinduism. Ten percent of the population following Islam and the Christianity is followed by 7% of the people.[1]

Buddhism is the major religion and it is the Official religion according to Article nine of the Constitution, which enacts: "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana".

The Muslims in Sri Lanka have a peaceful history of co-existence with other ethnic groups for centuries and have always been trustworthy and supportive of the rulers. However, when ethno-religious nationalism emerged among the major ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, the Muslims faced challenges in terms of fostering their ethnic identity and religious–cultural practices. Particularly, during the post-civil war period, the Muslim minority became the target of ethno-religious hatred and violence from vigilante groups of right-wing Buddhist monks and laypersons who claimed to be protecting the Sinhala-Buddhist nation, race, and culture from the perceived incursions of Islamic extremism. This started as early as the colonial period, where both the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders attempted to undermine the history and the distinctive ethnic features of Muslims. However, Muslim intellectuals and leaders counter-argued and restored their ethnicity and ethnic identity. Even so, extreme nationalist forces have continuously targeted the Muslims using different means (Sarjoon, 2016).

The native population of the island is predominantly Buddhist mostly Sinhalese. The Moor community consisted of two segments, the Ceylon Moor who originated from the Arab traders and the Indian Moors who were at the time natives and residents of South India, who came to Ceylon for trade. By 1915, the Ceylon Moors who had controlled trade in most parts of the

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[1] http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Population/StaticalInformation/CPH2011

island had been ousted by the Indian Moors. A dispute arose between the Indian Moors and the Buddhist Temple authorities of *Wallahagoda Dewala*. The Indian Moors objected to the Buddhist *Perahera* (religious pageant) procession traveling past their mosque with music. The Buddhist authorities agreed to alter the time and day of the procession to avoid disruption to their worship, but refused to conduct the procession without the music citing that it was a practice carried-out from time immemorial, safeguarded by the terms of the Kandyan Convention.

Since 1915 there have been riots between the two ethnic communities to the present times. In 1976, a conflict occurred in Puttalam. There were incidents in Galle in 1982. Riots did take place in Mawanella in 2001 – 30th April to 2nd May 2001. This leads to the crucial factor in understanding anti-Muslim violence in the context of Sinhala-Muslim tensions—the highly politicized and prejudiced nature of law enforcement and policing. Time after time policing and law enforcement failed or simply refused to protect Muslims and their property from attacks by Sinhalese mobs or even provoked the violence (Nagaraj & Haniffa, 2017).

Following the military defeat of LTTE terrorism in May 2009, the relationship between ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka became seriously fragmented as a result of intensified anti-minority sentiments and violence. Consequently, the ethnic Muslims (Moors) became the major target. (Sarjoon, 2016). Throughout much of the 25-year Sri Lankan conflict, attention has focused on the confrontation between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils. The views of the country's Muslims, who are 8 percent of the population and see themselves as a separate ethnic group, have largely been ignored (Crisis Group Asia, 2007).

Sri Lanka's ethnic and religious differences are widening and there are fears that communal tensions in the country will mirror Myanmar. In order to remain in power or return to power, ethnic and religious leaders have manipulated the ethnic and religious vote. Successive governments are reluctant to take decisive actions against extremist preachers and wider intolerance for fear that it would affect their vote bank. The state needs to take a decisive stand in the cyber and physical space to contain the threat of extremism and intolerance across ethnic and religious lines. The communal mobilization for political ends since 1956 has divided the people into three parts, Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils, gravely damaging the socio-political fabric of Sri Lanka. The riots of 2014 (Aluthgama) and 2018 (Kandy - Digana) should not come as a surprise in a country that is already divided along communal and religious lines. Integrating the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims politically, socially and economically is a

critical step towards social harmony. (Gunaratne, 2018) The sustained campaign against minorities, particularly Muslims, eventually erupted into communal riots in June 2014. On 12 June 2014, during *Poson Poya* (celebration of Buddhism's arrival in Sri Lanka), in Dharga Town. Four people were killed, 80 injured and at least 10,000 people (8,000 Muslims and 2,000 Sinhalese) displaced (Gunaratne, 2018).

The March 2018 Sinhala-Muslim riots in March 2018 in Kandy in Sri Lanka underline growing communal schisms in the island state. The rise of Sinhala ultra-nationalism and the violent groups primarily responsible for Sinhala-Muslim unrest since 2012. The establishment's insufficient and delayed response to anti-Muslim violence for fear of being alienated by the Buddhist Sinhala population has complicated matters further. The communal strife necessitates stricter law enforcement against groups practicing violence and preaching hatred as well as measures to restore communal harmony (Gunaratne, 2018).

Despite the anticipation of peace and reconciliation restoring in the country following the defeat of the LTTE and the elimination of war in 2009, violence against the other communities was spread out by the various politically backed radical Sinhala Buddhist organizations. It was the Sinhala Buddhist Supremacism with the support of extremist forces like *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) and Sihala Ravaya (SR) that attempted to juxtapose the minorities as 'Others' against majority Buddhists with the patronage of the then government. Aluthgama riot against Muslims on 15th June 2014 was the culmination of the well-orchestrated continuous vitriolic anti-Muslim campaign undertaken by these extremist forces. (Rameez, 2015).

Nonviolence is a deceptively complex concept. It has been written about for well over two millennia and, as would be expected, it is much nuanced. If fully understood and routinely applied within human interaction, it has the potential to transform our communities and in profound and positive ways. What do aggression and violence mean? How does nonviolence compare to aggression and violence? How are nonviolence and pacifism similar and different from one another? (Mayton, 2009).

Nonviolence is the right path to pursue regardless of religious affiliation. Obviously, it occupies the ethical high ground. And a comprehensive study has shown that nonviolent resistance not only is the morally superior choice but also is twice as effective as the violent variety. That is the startling and reassuring discovery by Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth (2011), who analyzed an astonishing 323 resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006.

In many instances, violence begets violence. However, as the three advocates above have shown, in some instances, violence is met by nonviolent responses. Sometimes the victim merely does not respond violently, while in others they respond through political nonviolent action such as with discussion, awareness raising, etc. The perpetrators are made to understand the futility of their action through the subtle or overt nonviolent actions of the victim. Nonviolence is not the absence of violence: in some instances, people do lash back. However, nonviolence is more calculated to win over audiences, as will be shown in the literature review of this thesis.

Historically, the Muslims in Sri Lanka were identified as a peaceful community. They have followed the *Sufism* which teaches nonviolence, tolerance and harmony. The *Sufi* masters of various different orders such as, *Qadiriyya, Shazuliya, Naqshabandiya, Rifayiya,* and *Dhistiyya* came to Sri Lanka to worship Adam's Peak since it is identified as the place where the footprint of Prophet Adam exists. Some of them returned and some were remained in the country and guided the Muslims through *Sufi* understanding of Islam. They build public Mosques in various part of the island; many mosques were named '*Muhiyaddeen'* mosques.[2] They also build *Thakkiya* and *Zaviya* to conduct their *Sufi* rituals since it is prohibited to conduct other sermons in the public mosques as it disturbs the prayers. Then in the 1950s *Thableek Jamaath* was introduced to Sri Lanka as a *Sufi* Reformist Project.[3] Most of the scholars of this group were identified as *Sufi* masters of *Naqshabandiyya* and *Dhisthiyya* Orders but they were critique on the original version of the *Sufism* and its rituals such as shrine visiting and celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, etc. Though this group was under severe attack of *Sufis*, in the late 1980s they became the majority among Muslim community in Sri Lanka. They did their preaching and rituals in the mosques belonging to *Sufi* orders. In 1980, another group, *Jamath-e-Islami* originating in Pakistan was introduced to Sri Lanka. They are mostly identified as political reformists as well as they are fully against to the *Sufism* and it is well established only in Puttalam District.

In the 1990s, *Wahhabism* was introduced after some of Muslim students who were educated in the Middle Eastern countries, especially at Islamic University of Madinah in Saudi Arabia and this movement has successfully established in the various parts of the country even building

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[2] *Muhiyaddeen* (reviver of Islam) is a special name for Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gilani, the Head *Sufi* Master of Qadiri Order.
[3] Yoginder Sikand, Tablighi Jamaat and Hindu Revivalism, May 18, 2008,
http://tablighijamaat.wordpress.com/2008/05/18/tablighi-jamaat-and-hindu-revivalism/

their own mosques getting funds from various non-governmental organizations. This group is currently fragmented into many due to their internal ideological and theological controversies. They are the smallest group but their influence among the youth is significant. This group is harshly criticized due to its extremism and violent behaviours by all the Sinhalese including the Muslims. In this background one could realise that the Muslim community has seen some changes in its ideologies and philosophies in that they went from a majoritarian *Sufism*-based Islam to a fragmented society that allows for *Wahhabism* and this change is important in looking at violence (and nonviolence) in the Sri Lankan context.

By the Sinhala ethno-nationalist hardliners such as mostly by the supporters of *Sihala Ravaya* and the *Ravana Balakaya*, though it was widely blamed the *Bodu Bala Sena* which was inciting the riot. *Bodu Bala Sena* has engaged in various anti-Muslim campaigns since 2012 due to the fact that the extremist sect of Muslims has been trying to implement Islamic sharia law such as issuing halal certificates, increasing Arab dress codes among Muslims, especially covering face, establishing sharia banks (*Amana* Bank) and increasing number of Mosques in Sri Lanka. The terrorist attacks of *Al-Quida* and the IS were identified as a very danger for the existence of peace and harmony among the communities belonging to various religions. This situation made fear among extremist Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, that the Muslim community in the country could also attack the non-Muslims and also created rifts and anger among the Sinhalese community against the Muslims. So, they attack the Muslim community, creating. This is a vicious circle of being open to extremism and violence.

As this study is mainly based on riot that happened in Aluthgama in 2014, the following subsection briefed the background of the riot.

Aluthgama Riot[4]: Dharga Town is a place where the Sinhalese are the minority. Pathirajagoda is a small part of Dharga Town. In this place, a driver of a monk was attacked by a couple of Muslim youths. The driver scolded the Muslim youth using the term '*thambia*'[5] in a conflictual

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[4] The quotations and the citations in this part is taken from the book, Mayhem during Curfew: Attacks on Aluthgama, Dharga Town and Beruwala Muslims written by Latheef Farook. It is the author's publication, published in 2014. This monograph contains a collection of selected articles on the attacks on Muslims in Aluthgama, Beruwala and surrounding areas alleged by mobs instigated by the *Bodu Bala Sena* Organisation during 15 - 17 June 2014. The articles compiled in this book were already published in the print and electronic media.

[5] Thambia (little brother) is a term used by some Sinhalese for Muslims. Muslims do not like to be called by this term. The literary meaning of this term is the Muslims are younger brothers and Sinhalese are elder brothers. Therefore, the Muslims must listen to the Sinhalese and obey them. In short, the Sinhalese have power and the Muslims are powerless.

conversation. However, the monk complained to the police that he was attacked by the Muslim youth. The monk was also admitted to the hospital. In this case, three Muslim youth were caught by the Aluthgama Police and they were attacked by the other Buddhist monks inside the police. The Sinhalese were mobilized surrounding the police. However, the tense situation was controlled by the police increasing the security forces in the area.

During this time, the *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) behaved aggressively towards Muslims all over the country. This Aluthgama incident had given an opportunity to them to mobilize more Sinhalese people to their cause. They organized a rally against Muslims in Aluthgama on the 15th of June, 2014, and planned a march towards *Pathirajagoda* Buddhist temple through the Muslim village, Dharga Town. The Muslim community in Dharga Town and the All Ceylon *Jammiyyathul Ulama* (ACJU) complained to the police about the dangerousness of the rally. The Inspector General of Police responded to them saying, "It is a religious gathering and we have employed enough forces" and asked them not to worry about their security. They had kept the tear gas and the water cannon ready. These preparations created doubt among the Muslims. They thought that these pre-security arrangements were made in the interest of the BBS and not the interest of the Muslims. Therefore, the people in the area believed that this was an organized and well-planned act of the government directed by the Defense Secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksha, brother of the President Mahinda Rajapaksha.

The security forces and the ACJU asked the people to close all the shops in order to avoid problems on the day of the rally. On the day before the rally, Dharga Town *Jammiyyathul Ulama* (DTJU) gathered a meeting in the Big Mosque of Dharga Town to discuss the situation after the *Isha* Prayer. Many people of the area, including the businessmen of Dharga Town and the outside businessmen who run businesses in the town, had participated in that discussion.

There were two groups in that meeting. One group was fully nonviolent; the other group was extreme. The nonviolent group agreed to close the shops and agreed that that is the strategy to avoid problems; the extreme group did not agree to the suggestion and questioned the organizers of the meeting questioning about who they had to fear, telling the organizers that they are ready to face any problems meaning that if the Sinhalese Buddhists attacked the Muslims, they will counterattack them. Of course, they had the capacity to counterattack. In this radical group, most were youth (less than 40 years old) and many of them belonged to the group of *Thoheed Jamath.* This group is identified by both nonviolent Muslims and the non-Muslims as a radical movement who wishes to implement Islamic politics in the country.

It was a difficult situation to make a decision due to this pro and against response. However, the majority (most of them elders) were in favor of the nonviolent response. The situation was beyond the control of the DTJU. They announced that they will take a decision after the discussion with the group members and inform them after the *Subah Azan* (calling for Morning Prayer) considering the voices of all. The decision was announced over the loudspeaker of the mosque. It was to close the shops. According to them and many other locals, this was the only option to avoid the expected logical outcome of the rally.

This was the first time, in an expected communal violence situation, that the *Jammiyyathul Ulama* gathered people in a mosque. They have voluntarily acted as the sole representative of the Muslim community even in political matters. In previous communal violent cases, only community and political leaders involved and made decisions. They gathered in their private houses. During the Kaleel Place communal riot in Kalutara in 1994, the people gathered and made the decision at the house of one of the community leaders. It is rare to see the participation of Islamic religious leaders in the decision-making process of political/communal matters. However, in this instance, the religious leaders took the helm possibly due to the importance of the matter. Admittedly, the religious leaders wield influence in the community because of the closeness to the mosque.

1.2   Research Problem

In Sri Lanka, communal violence is seen mostly between the Sinhalese and Muslim communities, evidenced by many communal riots starting from 1915, a 100 years ago, and the tension continues with riots from time to time. The emergence of the extremist Sinhala Buddhist groups such as *Sihala Ravaya*, *Ravana Balakaya*, and the *Bodu Bala Sena* in recent times has seriously found opportunities/situations to act against the Muslims. The tension leads to riots resulting in death and destruction of property. While in the beginning, these were isolated incidents of tension and violence, in the past decade or so, the violence has turned international-level and continuous. Each incident seems to feed into the other so that there are very few that are isolated. The Muslim community is attacked where it hurts them the most: their economy. Continuous tension with riots at some points generally are very harmful to the ethnic harmony, social progress, economic prosperity of ethnic communities and finally to the whole country. However, it has been observed that the Muslims have responded nonviolently. The tension continues in terms of the nonviolent response to violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka. Looking at the violence that has erupted over the past few decades, it is apparent that

there is some tension between the two communities that manifests in violent attacks. The Muslims respond in ways that are not violent, due to many reasons, mainly because it will then lead to more violence from the majority. Accordingly, this research explores even though extremist Sinhala Buddhist ethnocratic nationalists have acted violently against the Muslims, the Muslims have not responded in the same manner, why?

1.3 Research Questions

The thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How the ethnic tension resulted in conflicts and what are the factors that cause the ethnic tension resulting in conflicts?
2. How did the Muslims respond to the conflicts and riots resulting from the tension between Sinhalese and Muslims and how effective were the Muslims' chosen nonviolent means to manage the riots?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the research is to examine the causes for the continuous tension between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims in Sri Lanka and to ascertain the effectiveness of nonviolence approach of ethnic Muslims to manage conflicts and riots.

Specific Objectives are as Follows:

1. To examine evolution of the ethnic tension and resulting conflicts / riots historically between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims in Sri Lanka.
2. To analyze factors that cause the ethnic tension and the resulting conflicts / riots between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims in Sri Lanka.
3. To examine the ways of responses of the ethnic Muslims to the conflicts and riots resulted from the tension between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims.
4. To ascertain causes for ethnic Muslims to choose the nonviolent means to manage the riots.

1.5 Research Methods

The research design consists of a mix of both questionnaire survey and case study method administered through 24 in-depth interviews with persons selected based on their knowledge and experience as well as on a random basis. The general research approach for this study has

been random sampling since the research was conducted in a real-life environment pertaining to a particular ethnic community in Sri Lanka whose members live all parts of the country, with heavy to medium concentration in some areas. The overall approach of the research design is deductive that facilitates content analysis helping to examine the core research problem under study.

1.6   Working Hypothesis

In Sri Lanka, Muslim leaders have for the last 25 years with the help of *Sufi* religious conceptions sought to formulate and implement an active policy of nonviolence with the intention of containing violence and thereby protecting their community from further harm. It is hypothesized that the Muslim community in Sri Lanka has chosen nonviolent approaches to violent attacks as a strategy.

1.7   Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand violence, nonviolence, and the communal violence between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Muslims in Sri Lanka in a bid to help move the community away from violence to nonviolence. It aims to map the responses of the Muslims to understand how the minority reacts in ways that are aimed at avoiding violence. This understanding will be crucial in pushing both communities to address their issues in nonviolent ways to create long-lasting peace.

1.8   Limitations and Knowledge Gap

The research was limited in identifying and approaching the required sample. This was exacerbated by gaps in literature. While there are many books on nonviolent approaches and violence, the specific condition of the Sri Lankan situation was not addressed in the literature. Thus, it was necessary to extend existing literature to cover the situation under review. Also, the conflicts under review have not been researched so there was no literature on the topic to draw on. There were also some ethical considerations when conducting the research given that the research approached people who have been beset by violence and suffering. To speak to them about this violence and suffering could cause psychological harm but this was mitigated by being sensitive to them and their needs.

1.9   Chapter Outline

The remaining chapters are as follows: Chapter-2 will present the related theory and review of literature that would help develop the conceptual framework and to identify the research gap/s. Chapter-3 will present the methods of research adopted for the study. Chapters 4 to 7 will analyze the data and present the results in an attempt to answer each of the research questions: chapter -8 will provide the conclusion of the thesis with recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and Concepts

Introduction

The following chapter reviews the literature on the topic under discussion. The chapter analyses the existing literature on nonviolence, and discusses the practices and history of Muslims and the Islamic religion in Sri Lanka. This chapter also evaluates, summarises, compares and contrasts, and connects various academic books, research articles, and other related literary sources that are rightly correlated to this research.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In part one, the concepts such as violence against minorities, nonviolent responses, ethnic riots, and ethnocratic nationalism are broadly discussed. In part two, multiple theories of nonviolence will be critically examined. Political views of nonviolence (or passive resistance) espoused by Gandhi, Sharp, and Ackerman and Kruegler will be summarised in this part. The final part explores the relationship between Islam and nonviolence with reference to *Sufism*.

2.1   Concepts and Definitions

2.1.1   Violence against Minority

Since the early 20th century there has been a significant growth in violence against minorities in Sri Lanka and therefore, the issue of violence against Muslims by the Sinhala ethnocratic-nationalists has become the subject of much consideration and this is reflected in numerous researches. In peace and conflict studies, violence is obviously and exceedingly a multifaceted occurrence, containing major uncertainty between the devastation and the establishment of order. In certain situations, violence is identified as force, aggression, conflict and power, etc. However, these synonyms do not present the exact conceptual meaning of violence. In this, one could realise that social science researchers face difficulties when they do research on violence due to the substantial differences from case to case in the practises of violence. According to Reidel and Walesh (2002:3), violence is identified as using force that has been not permitted by law.

This thesis studies the violence committed by (organised) large groups of individuals representing the majority against minorities that is related to hate crimes, terrorist acts, and

mob violence. This kind of violence is termed as structural violence by Johan Galtung (1969). He proposed that ethnocentrism, nationalism, and racism are examples of structural violence. These three concepts are useful to study the violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka.[6] Violence based on the mentioned phenomena is closely linked to social injustice. The study of violence in this thesis is linked to hate crimes, racial violence, police violence, and state violence.

Generally, violence against the ethnic minority is identified as ethnic violence. According to Popitz (1992) and von Trotha (1997), ethnic violence could be defined as actions aimed at physically harming persons on the basis of their ethnic background. Pogroms, riots, and massacres are forms of collective violence. These are the forms of violence between Tamil-Muslim and Sinhalese-Muslim ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Minorities are violently targeted due to a host of contrived reasons such as their race, ethnicity, and religion. Sometimes, violence is used against the minority to control their self-determination in political, cultural, and economic behaviours. In this sense, it can be understood that the violent actions against the minority play a major role in maintaining the political and social norms of the majority.

The term 'ethnocracy' is used by the researchers Yiftachel and Ghanen (2004) to point out the ethnicization of state power and the land by the people who are the majority in a multi-ethnic country. In contemporary Sri Lanka, it is seen that ethnocracy is taking place: Sinhala Buddhist ethnocratic nationalists, including some Buddhist monks, criticise the Sinhalese leaders and recognised Buddhist monks alleging that there are several crucial problems that the Sinhalese Buddhists face and that none of the leaders play an active role to attempt to resolve this problem. They see threats to the Sinhalese people in the establishment of various Muslim religious projects, the spread of foreign-funded extreme Muslim groups, and the reinterpretation of Muslim cultural values. Given this context, some of the Sinhalese Buddhist ethnocratic nationalist organisations such as *Bodu Bala Sena*, *Sihala Ravaya*, and *Ravana Balakaya* – all headed by Buddhist monks – periodically attempt to seize the law into their hands and violently attack[7] the Muslim people in various ways. These types and instances of violence are politically motivated. The result is that the minority suffers bigotry and can be motivated to violence in some instances. While Muslim people are usually peace-loving, extreme cases of violence against them could result in revenge. However, such acts of

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[7] Hate speech and physical violence

vengeance have not yet taken place. In fact, the Muslim population have been extremely nonviolent in the face of such attacks. This is not to say they have not responded; they have, sometimes even with violence on the houses of neighbours. However, this is more an instinctive reaction in anger on the part of young Muslim men, but as a collective, the Muslim population have relied on political and nonviolent means to convince the majority and to bring them back to the path of peace.

2.1.2 Nonviolent Response

In talking about violence and nonviolence, it is necessary to understand the answer to "what is nonviolence?" Thoreau is called the "ultimate conscientious objector by Jahanbegloo (2014:63) for his belief that "the right to resist the government was a moral duty." Thoreau spoke of civil disobedience, and Tolstoy spoke of "universal love and spiritual brotherhood" (Jahanbegloo, 2014:58-63). This research does not agree with equating nonviolence response with love, as Jahanbegloo has done in certain instances possibly influenced by Tolstoy, but instead believes that nonviolent action can be merely political, economic or social.

Thus, nonviolence includes political action, and subtle methods of conveying one's argument without using violence when faced with violence. Unlike Gandhi, this is not passive resistance alone. Here, it is important to understand what nonviolence is. Nonviolence can be pragmatic or principled. The nonviolent response can be attempting to engage in discussions with the oppressor (or a representative) or it can be any action that rejects violence both physical and psychological (Holmes, 1971). Sharp, quoted in Jahanbegloo, talks about pragmatic nonviolence, "a method of struggle concerned with the results nonviolence can achieve" (2014:88). He talks about 200 specific methods of nonviolent action, which Jahanbegloo classifies under 3 categories: nonviolent protest and persuasion, non-cooperation, and nonviolent interpretation (2014, 88). He says that these actions can even undermine a government. The action can convert people by seeing the "suffering" of the victim, or it can persuade people of the merits of a belief or way of life (Jahanbegloo, 2014:89). This conversion is part of a mechanism of change, which also includes accommodation – occurring as "a result of withdrawal from economic and/or political cooperation by the resisters", nonviolent coercion – where a dictator is "stripped of power", and finally disintegration or the demise of the government leaving the way open for a new government (Jahanbegloo, 2014:90).

In this context of pragmatic nonviolence, this thesis looks at the nonviolent response of the Muslims, especially in terms of their practical application when faced with violent attacks. The following sections detail the meanings of nonviolence in practical and theoretical terms.

Violence against Muslims in Sri Lanka by the Sinhalese ethnocratic nationalists has a history spanning over a century. The 1915 Sinhala Muslim Riots, the 2001 Mawanella Riots, and the 2014 Aluthgama riots are the well-known and discussed violent actions against the Muslims by the Sinhalese ethnocratic nationalists. However, there have been many other violent incidents against Muslims at the village level, such as the Kaleel Place (Kalutara) riot in 1994.[8] In all these violent situations, the Muslim community responded in a nonviolent manner. The term "nonviolent responses" does not mean that the Muslims did not carry out any violent acts. Public awareness of the theory and practice of nonviolent response are different. The public understanding of the concept of nonviolence is that people who have been attacked must react without violence and without using violent means. In this context, nonviolence remains mysterious and controversial, which is contrary to what the scholars mentioned here believe.

Extending Sharp's general argument (Jahanbegloo, 2014:92-94), it is understood that in Sri Lanka, the Muslims understand that the state-led or state-support violence against them cannot be combated with violence. They own fighting power because the human resources and the financial and political backing is on their side. To take them on, the Muslims would need broader powers and thus, it would be futile. Also, they understand that nonviolence in the way the public understands is nearly impossible. They cannot watch as their rights are trodden on. Thus, they have made a calculated move to pragmatic nonviolence. Not only do they engage in discussions and negotiations with the government and representatives of government, they also engage in political action such as concerted efforts at elections. Their representatives in the parliament speak out for them in instances such as the Aluthgama riots. In Mayhem during Curfew, Farook (2014, 30-31) has used an unsourced article titled *President Rajapaksa scolds Rishad Badhiutheen at Cabinet meeting and tells his Commerce Minister to "stop speaking and shut up"* where it is said that both Rauf Hakeem and Badhiutheen spoke up against the

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[8] Kaleel Place is the name of a street where Muslims live in Kalutara. Kaleel Place riot happened in 1994, soon after the Sri Lanka Freedom Party was elected to rule the country. In this riot, four Muslim youth were shot down and killed by the Police and no action has been taken against them. One among them who was killed was a negotiator in between the Sinhala and the Muslim Communities. Sinhala ethnocratic nationalists damaged the houses and some other properties belonging to the Muslims in this riot.

BBS and its leader Gnanasara thero. While they were cowed in this particular instance, the Muslim leaders are aware of their responsibility within nonviolence.

However, the Muslims are not limited to speaking out. They do engage in other methods of nonviolence. Irwin and Faison are of the opinion that, 'Nonviolent action is not simply any method of action which is not violent' (1984:2). In certain cases, as mentioned previously, Muslims used violence against the Sinhalese to a certain extent soon after they were violently attacked. In the case of the 2014 Aluthgama riots, shortly after they were attacked, Muslim people damaged some properties of the few Sinhalese people who lived next to that Muslim village. In the 1915 riot, an Indian Muslim shot dead a Sinhalese boy in Kandy (Kannangara, 1984). Even in the Kaleel Place riot in 1994, Muslims damaged the properties of the Sinhalese who lived within the Muslim community. Thus, here, the nonviolent response of the Muslims does not mean that the Muslims did not use violence at all. However, Muslims did not attack the Sinhalese community in the manner that the Sinhalese attacked the Muslims. They made some damages to the few properties of the Sinhalese in a few cases as immediate retaliation. The 1915 riot was the only instance where a Sinhalese was killed by a Muslim. In all the other riots, only Muslims were killed. In all other instances, they have maintained a nonviolent path that centres on political action.

2.1.3 Ethnocratic Nationalism

According to Obeyesekere, the Sinhalese people who violently attacked the minorities are labelled as Sinhala nationalists, Sinhala Buddhist Nationalists, Sinhala extremists, etc. (1979). These terms do not precisely demarcate the people who wish to harm the minorities. There are in fact Sinhala nationalists who accept that the country belongs to all communities, whether Sinhalese, Muslims, or Tamils. These people accept Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic and multicultural country and wish to use a common and equal name for all people: 'Sri Lankan'. However, there are some Sinhalese people who believe that only the Sinhalese should have power while allowing the minorities to access their cultural rights. 'Sinhala Buddhist nationalism defined Sri Lanka as a nation for the Sinhala-speaking Buddhists only' (Jacobsen in Knut A. Jacobsen and Selva J. Raj, 2008:123). These Sinhalese people wish that the state would practice majoritarian democracy.

There are some Sinhalese people who wish to practice a single law that is equal for all. They wish to remove provisions in the constitution that allows the minorities to access their cultural

rights under the law of *Thesawalamai* law and the Muslim personal law. These people seek ethnic dictatorship and an ethnic-centred state. In this ideology, there are some Buddhist monk-led organised movements such as *Bodu Bala Sena*, *Sihala Ravaya*, and *Ravana Balakaya* involved in and using violence against Minorities. Therefore, this thesis defines people violently attacking the minorities as 'Sinhala ethnocratic nationalists,' using the definition in Yiftachel and Ghanen cited previously. Sri Lanka (2005-2014), Israel, and Estonia were identified as ethnocratic regimes in Yiftachel and Ghanen's work (2004:647).

2.1.4 Ethnic Riot

An ethnic riot is generally defined as a disastrous attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group. Most studies of ethnic riots tend to emphasise social, cultural, economic, or political factors in the occurrence of ethnic violence (Horowitz, 2003). Sri Lanka has experienced much ethnic violence between the Sinhalese and the minority Tamils and Muslims. These riots have caused massive human suffering and led to the devastation of physical property and destruction of economic activity. Factors such as economic inequality, demographic variables, and political competition also influenced the occurrence of riots between the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Over the last couple of years, the Buddhist monk-led organizations have become involved in violence against the ethnic as well as religious minorities. Whenever there were tensions in the country between two ordinary people representing the majority and the minority, there was a fear that it could turn into a riot.

However, in the riots between Muslims and the Sinhalese, the Muslims were not killed or physically affected as happened in the riots in 'Southern Philippines (1971-72), Chad (1979), Tripura (1980), or Ghana (1994)' (Horowitz, 2003: 9) because in these riots thousands of people were killed. 'By world standards, an ethnic riot in which 100 people are killed is a serious disorder' (Horowitz, 2003: 9).

2.2   Theories of Nonviolence

The role of theory is vibrant in nonviolence studies and within all fields related to peace and conflict studies. As Fiske (2004) pointed out, a good theory presents estimations about causal relationships and causal inferences in rational, parsimonious, and general terms, which are falsifiable. Thus, theory on nonviolence is crucial to understanding the practical aspects of nonviolence as has taken place in Sri Lanka.

This section of the chapter examines the theories of nonviolence from various perspectives as developed by many social scientists. Since a single theory is not wide enough to study a phenomenon completely, this chapter uses several theories to study the nonviolent response of Muslims in Sri Lanka.

2.2.1 Philosophical Perspective

In the early seventies, Holmes (1971) attempted to develop a theory of nonviolence based on a philosophical perspective. He elaborated nonviolence as "either a tactic, a way of life, or a philosophy." He distinguished violence as being physical[9] and psychological[10]. Similarly, he further divided nonviolence into two: (i) rejection of physical violence, (ii) rejection of psychological violence. For him, nonviolence activists have to reject both. Holmes introduced three kinds of actions based on two types of nonviolence. Those actions are non-resistance[11], passive resistance,[12] and military nonviolence[13]. Holmes outlined certain principles to explain both nonviolent responses: one ought not to kill, not to wage war, and not to use physical or psychological violence.

Holmes rejected physical violence under nonviolence. This action of nonviolence was followed by the Muslims when they responded to the violence against them by the Sinhala ethnocratic nationalists in Sri Lanka. According to Holmes' model of nonviolence, Muslims were neither involved in non-resistance nor passive resistance. Their response led to political reforms even in mainstream politics: i.e. the regime change in 2015 is an example. Muslims' nonviolent approach is purely based on the principles of Holmes' nonviolent response because violence is not justifiable based on the *Quran* and *Sunnah* and it is not the only tool that could prevent violence against Muslims. At the same time, violent reactions are a tactic that one could use to achieve effective results. Further, though there are effective outcomes of using violence, due to the political, social, and economic situation of the Muslims in the country, they must tolerate and continue with the nonviolent response. However, the question could be aroused, to what extent the toleration could be endured.

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[9] This is an action done with the intent of doing harm physically.
[10] This is an action done with the intent of doing harm psychologically.
[11] In this case people are willing to suffer all the actions against them without any reactions.
[12] This means people who were attacked or affected do not want to cooperate with the opposition.
[13] Here nonviolence response has become powerful.

2.2.2 Anthropological Perspective

Patfoort (1987 & 2002) is a Flemish scholar who drew a conceptual framework of nonviolence from an anthropological perspective. She (1987) looks at nonviolence based on two principles, (i) nonviolence, which denotes the need to abstain from violence against others, (ii) personal power, which is that nonviolence is not passive but is a station of strength and power. In this sense, violence against Muslims and their nonviolent response in Sri Lanka politically strengthened the Muslims in the island. During the Presidential Election in January 2015 and the general election in August 2015, Muslims gathered under one political goal, forgetting regional, group, and ideological differences and showed that they are an important community in the country and that any aspiring government will be defeated if/when they ignore rights of the Muslims.

According to Patfoort (1987), nonviolence necessitates being balanced with personal power. The balance, in this sense, requires one to learn how to live with individual/community differences and to communicate during a conflict to acknowledge one's understanding of diverse perceptions in a manner that is not self-justifying. In this point, as Patfoort pointed out (1987) personal power involves no violence against oneself.

Patfoort agrees that one can approach being nonviolent at a maximum level, but one cannot be a perfectly nonviolent person. In the case of Muslims in Sri Lanka, they were not perfectly nonviolent when they responded to violence against them but they reacted against national politics when the state failed to control the violence against Muslims by the various ethno-nationalistic groups. This shows that the opponent of the Muslims, BBS, could not achieve what they really wanted. However, the less the Muslims allowed violence directed towards them to occur, the more it was possible for them to behave nonviolently towards their opponents during the riots. In this way, Muslim leaders succeeded in breaking the rotation of violence.

Patfoort argues that to be nonviolent, one must think through the justifications and the legitimations of the opponent as well. Sometimes, Muslim leaderships[14] in the country failed to consider the varying lookouts in a conflict between the Muslims and the Sinhalese Buddhists in a calm and peaceful manner. In the case of the authority that *Jammiyyathul Ulama* has to

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[14] Muslim leadership here refers to *Jammiyyathul* Ulema, a Muslim political leadership and the leadership of the Muslim nongovernmental organizations.

issue *Halal* certificates, the Muslim leadership failed to realise the importance of the interpretation of the BBS in this matter. Patfoort argues that to be nonviolent, one must understand the interpretation and the viewpoint of the opponents in a particular matter.

2.2.3 Sociological Perspective

Steihm (1968), a sociologist, introduced two types of nonviolent thoughts: one is conscientious, and other one is pragmatic. The conscientious approach speaks about social harmony at grassroots level among the people where they attempt to change the opponents according to their beliefs and values. The pragmatic approach attempts to defeat the opponents. They think of 'conflict as a relationship between antagonists with incompatible interests.'[15] That is why this approach assumes 'conflict is healthy, normal, and desirable' (Mayton II, 2009:36). During 2013 and 2014, Muslims were involved in many explanation discussions with Sinhala Buddhist monks and the active participants of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist organizations,[16] where they have participated in political discussions in media[17],[18], and arranged programmes such as Unity in Diversity.[19] This is part of their pragmatic nonviolent approach. However, this was a failed attempt: the BBS led the attack on the Halal certificate, and the Muslims were aware of this, which is what led to the regime change in 2015. On realizing the failure, they withdrew and gave up their cultural rights in the Halal issue, which is contrary to their religious rights.[20]

When conscientious approaches are not successful, Muslims use the practice of pragmatic nonviolent approach. Muslims attempted to create a political movement by creating a national dialogue that could make a political change through a regime change. Muslim religious scholars agreed with the pragmatic nonviolent approach of Muslims when the state failed to protect the rights of the minority in the country. Abu-Nimer (2006:138) also argues that 'pragmatic nonviolent approach is more appropriate in the Islamic context.' In this sense, one could realise that the nonviolent approach is the politics of ordinary people and it is a successful strategy of social struggle.

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[15] http://www.non-violenceinternational.net/seasia/whatis/book.php
[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR6m4TVEHLE
[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3U6rRK9ul0
[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY5fXYJFQao
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6_jE7bJ03k
[20] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnqT_JZS3zg

2.2.4 Psychological Perspective

Hare (1968b) – a social-psychologist – identified three kinds of behaviours, such as positive, negative, and neutral, when he described the behaviour of a nonviolent actor. These behaviours depend on the interest of the nonviolent actor towards the challenger. According to Hare, with all these three types of nonviolent activists, their behaviour is submissive or passive, which tends to elicit dominant behaviour from others (1968b). These actors' behaviour (positive, negative, and neutral) depends on his or her ability to express the reaction towards the opponent. In all these cases, the behaviour of the actor may be miscommunicated to others and it is the interpretation of others that will regulate their responses. This categorization of behaviour is relevant to study what kind of actors take part in negotiations in a violent situation as well as how they negotiate.

Kool, another psychologist, contributed to the development of the theory of nonviolence. Kool differentiated acts of nonviolence from nonviolent acts. "The nonviolent act is any normative behaviour that does not include aggressive or violent aspects" and "the act of nonviolence are nonviolent behaviours in situations where aggression and violence might be reasonably expected responses by many" (Mayton II in Sims, et al, 2014:47). History shows us that at the onset of ethnic riots, Muslims in Sri Lanka react immediately and a little violently and aggressively, but during the riots the Muslims are neither aggressive nor violent due to the fear that the riots could spread all over the island and that could result in severe damages for them since they are a minority in the country. However, the use of both acts attempts to communicate with each other to avoid violence. The purpose of nonviolent action is to resolve conflict in areas where aggression or violence might be a legitimate response. According to Mayton II (in Sims et.al, 2014:47), "a person with a peaceful personality would be expected to engage in both nonviolent acts and acts of nonviolence." Yet, it is hard to find records of Muslims in Sri Lanka responding aggressively and violently to being attacked violently.

Further, Kool (1993b) describes the moral concerns of nonviolence. This includes both the justice and the caring perspectives. The thesis applies these perspectives to the study of the role of the people from both the Sinhalese and the Muslim communities in solving the conflict nonviolently. In a situation of ethnic violence, there may be various kinds of people such as youths, gangsters, ideologically influenced people, politicians, and the political activists, could be involved and their behaviors and their actions. Some could think in the way of making peace and some may think in the way of increasing problems or their actions and reactions could have

made problems. In a moral sense, among the Muslims, some might have thought that they are the minority and there is a limit to their actions and reactions at the same time, majority people can think about it from a different angle. At the same time, many Sinhalese people complained about the people of their own community who were involve in violence.

There is several evidence that many Sinhalese people protected the affected Muslims during the riots. In many situations when the riots spread outside the area of its origin, the Muslims who lived as a very small community were protected by the surrounded Sinhalese and taken care of by the Sinhalese (Farook, 2014:36).

Kool (1993b) further made an attempt to explore nonviolence referring to power or the capacity to influence the behaviors of others. According to Kool, integrative power is the right choice to explain nonviolence. This type of power helps to bring the people together towards a common and collective good. Kool believes that when nonviolent individuals try to attain social harmony through moral behavior, they gain power that affects the conscience of the committers of violence.

Teixeira introduced a holistic theory of nonviolence with the aim of achieving 'a pluralistic society, multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-faith' (199:558). It is a pragmatic and humanistic-oriented theory. According to Teixeira, nonviolence is any action without harmful intent. It is about 'a fundamental way of perceiving and thinking about oneself and the world' and 'assumes an interconnectedness that is transpersonal or spiritual' (1999:558). In this line of thinking, *Sufi* spiritual teachings also encourage nonviolent response and are trained to bear the harm instead of turning on the opponent to make them suffer in a conflict.

2.2.5 Political Perspective

According to Gandhi, humans are genetically nonviolent. As viewed by Bondurant (1965: 189), Gandhi did not develop a political theory but is a political actionist. His goal was to achieve welfare for all. The aim of his nonviolent actions was to bring social justice. His method is respected but Muslims have chosen slightly varied versions of nonviolence. They transcend passivity and work with nonviolent political action.

Sharp is a prominent analyst of nonviolent political actions. According to Sharp (1959: 567), nonviolent political action is "A technique of action in conflicts in which participants conduct the struggle by doing – or refusing to do – certain acts without using physical violence."

According to Sharp, nonviolence is an active response in a conflict situation. People who are involved in nonviolent resistance try to reduce the power of the opponent and increase their own power. The understanding of this power difference is central to the practice of nonviolent action. Sharp (1990: 1) noted that "The practice, dynamics, and consequences of nonviolent struggle are all directly dependent upon the wielding of power and its effects on the power of the opponent group." This quote indicates that Sharp situates power at the top of nonviolent action.

Nonviolent responses to conflict situations involve many types of methods. As mentioned previously, Sharp (1999) identified a number of nonviolent methods and classified into three: (i) nonviolent protest and persuasion, e.g.: picketing (ii) nonviolent noncooperation, e.g.: political relations with one's opponent in the conflict situation, and (iii) nonviolent intervention. The nonviolent action of Muslims in Sri Lanka is based on Sharp's second method. According to Sharp, it is a more powerful nonviolent action.

Ackerman and Kruegler's (1994) approach to nonviolence is pragmatic. According to them, nonviolent actions are reasonable and effective when the party's motivation is to defeat the opponent to avoid violence. Their theory is that "the quality of strategic choices made by nonviolent protagonists matters to the outcome of nonviolent struggle" (Ackerman and Kruegler, 1994:2). Muslims brought pressure against the (Rajapaksha) government by mobilizing social, economic, and political power without causing any physical injury to the opponent, especially during the Aluthgama riot. However, they made a few, small damages to the properties of the Sinhalese neighbors. Both Ackerman and Kruegler recognize that mostly all conflicts involve violence methods at some level even if violence is only a perceived threat.

Further, they (1994) noted that any nonviolent campaign involves both offensive and defensive operations. The Muslims' nonviolent actions are defensive; they protect their ability to stay in the conflict with a view to sooner or later being victorious. As an offensive operation, Muslims campaigned for the United National Party during both Presidential and General elections in 2015, which helped to reduce the opponents' power. According to Ackerman and Kruegler, nonviolent actions/sanctions have to be a mix of offense and defense and have to be regulated during a campaign to maximize their efficiency. This helps to change one's opponents' minds regarding the nature of the conflict. During and after the riots in Aluthgama, most Sinhalese people agreed that the settlement was preferable and they forced the government to realize that continuing violence against Muslims is not possible.

2.3   Locating Nonviolence within *Sufism*

The 9/11 attack placed Islam as a religion of conflict and war motivated by bloodshed and violent tendencies. After this incident, Muslim contribution to nonviolence has been ignored. However, history shows that Islam has shown acceptance of all religions and their respective communities (Jahanbegloo, 2014:41).[21] Also, contrary to popular belief, Muslims are to wage war within themselves against the ego, known as *Jihad*, and not against external forces as proposed by extremists (Jahanbegloo, 2014:41-42).

Sufism functions as a guide to Islam, practicing mediations aimed at promotion and alleviation of nonviolence. It promotes the nonviolent management of conflict and the pursuit of social justice, which we refer to as peace-making and peace-building respectively. *Sufism* addresses the problem of violence and is intended to make violence less frequent and less intense. *Sufi* approaches to peace building is a process designed to encourage nonviolence. *Sufism* is more reactive to the more dramatic and episodic nature of violence and it is more proactive as it promotes social justice. *Sufi* rituals are a threat to those who identified as extremists (*Salafists* and *Wahhabis*) and *Sufi* approach of conflict management labelled those extremist as *Jihadists*. *Sufism* is followed by most Sri Lankan Muslims, as opposed to the 1% of extremist *Wahhabi*sts. However, *Wahhabi*sts are encroaching on the mosques managed by *Sufi*sts, which can have negative repercussions in the future.

However, it should be mentioned that there are other aspects that advocate the use of violence. Thomas Hobbes viewed violence as a rational means to achieve political goals such as territory, safety and glory. Charles Tilly pointed out that the states which have powerful militaries are strong and the states which were not capable to fight against other states were conquered. Silavoj Žižek (2008) pointed out that the actions of historical monsters like Hitler and Stalin are not violent enough to achieve their goals. Benjamin Ginsberg (2013) defends the use of Violence in his book, *The Value of Violence*. He argues that violent struggles such as war, revolution and terrorism determine what nations will exist and their relative power; most of the past centuries the world was dominated by the West through their capacity for violence; it is normal that violent groups could be defeated only by using superior force against them. He brings examples from Libya and Syria. Peaceful protesters in Libya cannot face the attack of the government with tanks and machine guns. They could defeat the Qadaffi Regime with the

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[21] In India, the Mogul Emperor Akbar represented Islam as tolerant and accepting of diversity.

help of NATO airstrikes. The Syrian protesters face the Asad government only through force. Considering his explanation one could conclude that violence could be defeated by violence.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid the theoretical foundation and identified the existing literature in the field of peace and conflict studies in terms of violence, nonviolent responses, ethnic riots, ethnocratic nationalism, *Sufism* and *Wahhabism*, and Sri Lanka's ethnic and communal riots. The chapter has engaged with the theory within the topic under research drawing from the comments made by those interviewed. The following chapters will help situate the argument of the thesis by expounding on the findings of this research within the parameters of the theories used.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods adopted in the study. The study has been conducted appreciating the scientific research methods paying due attention to the implications of various aspects of the research issue. This may give an insight into methods of research such as the design, data source, data collection, approaches for data analysis and presentation of results.

3.1 Research Design

The research consists of 24 in-depth individual and group interviews. The general research approach for this study has been random and targeted sampling since the research was conducted in a real-life environment pertaining to a particular ethnic community in Sri Lanka whose members live in all parts of the country, with heavy to medium concentration in some areas. The overall approach facilitates to critically examining the core research problem of this study. It also helped to investigate ethnic issues which were extremely complicated due to different relations with several ethnic communities surrounding the problem in depth and detail. A descriptive analysis has been used in this research as the aim of this study is to describe the relationships between ethnic communities.

3.2 Data Source

Data source of the research is both primary and secondary. Substantial volume of secondary data pertaining to theory, concepts, definitions involving many other countries have been found in the literature published all over the world. The data related to conflicts, their origins, process and implications have been analyzed. The other major source of data was the primary source. Data was collected from randomly selected people and targeted key informants by way of interviewing them. In this category of interviewed people, there are ordinary people, members belongs to various ideologies of Islamic movements, ethnic groups, religions, regions and *Sufi* orders, professors, political analysts and activists, religious and community leaders, school teachers, eye-witnesses of riots, peace-negotiator of the Aluthgama riot, executive officer of the BBS, Buddhist monks, former LTTE commander, Army chief, people belongs to Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Islamic religions, journalists and businessmen. The following paragraphs provide details about why these people were interviewed and what kind of questions they were asked in accordance with the objective of this research.

In Sri Lanka the main source of income of the Muslim people comes from business. They are involved in various kinds of Business. They have shops mainly in the Towns where Sinhalese are the majority except in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Therefore, they have good relations with the Sinhalese people. Interviewing those help to collect data about the nature of the community relationships especially during and after the riot situations. How the force of the Sinhala ethnocratic nationalists that not to buy things from the Muslim businessmen impacted on their community and business relationships with the Sinhalese; did the people belongs to the Sinhalese community boycott the shops belongs to the Muslims were the interesting questions to discuss with them during the interview.

Interviews with the Journalist share the information related to the role of the media during the riots and the interviews with various ideological groups assisted to collect data to study the reasons behind the ethnic riots and its justifications.

The people belonging to different religions shared thoughts on how they see the riots and the future of the ethnic relationships. I was in a position to collect data about who were the people they blame for this riot and why and who were the people involved in the riots. Additionally, I learnt the teachings of the religions about the ethnic harmony and peaceful coexistence as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using violence and nonviolence.

Interview with one of the high officials of the Sri Lanka Army contributed to the research providing information, how the Muslims were secured by the state from the threats and the violence of the LTTE in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces and what is the possibility of spread of Islamic extremism in the country.

One of the former LTTE commanders shares the information related to the mass killings in the Eastern Province and the ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in the Northern Province. Further he shared facts about how the LTTE protected the Muslim community and how Muslims were accommodated in their political agenda, etc.

Buddhist Monks and Islamic religious priests shared the importance of harmony among the communities in a multi-ethnic country like Sri Lanka and the benefit of the toleration and the nonviolence practices. Further, they also shared their religious teachings and guidance about the matters related to peace and conflict. The discussion about the role of the religious leaders

in the violent situation helps to analyze how the ethnic riots are settled and bring mutual understanding between the parties.

Data were collected about who the people participated in the negotiations, how negotiations took place, what religious and political thoughts were shared during the negotiations, how *Quran* and Buddhists teachings were referred to end the violence from the political activists and peace negotiators.

The interview with the eye-witnesses of the riot assisted to learn about immediate reasons for the Aluthgama riot, how the people of Sinhala and Muslim Communities attacked each other and what are the arms/weapons used during the riots, how Mosques and houses belongs to Muslims were attacked and what was the role of state security forces during this riots and violent attacks.

Interviewing school teachers facilitated collecting data about how the teachers and the Advance Level students understand the violence. The views and understanding of the ordinary people about the riots and Sinhala Muslim ethnic relations were analyzed in this study. The interview with the people belonging to the *Sufi* order shared their views about tolerance, patience and nonviolence based on the *Sufi* teachings.

Scholars delivered certain necessary secondary data to study the ethnic riots as well they provided information about the Muslim settlements in the country, their relationships with the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, the impact of Middle Eastern imported cultures and cultural shocks.

Further, both primary and secondary data collected was basically qualitative in nature.

3.3   Data Collection

Data collection has been done using either primary or secondary data collection tools. Primary data was collected by way of employing the following data collection tools viz individual and group interviews, formal and informal discussions and observation. Secondary data was collected from the literature. There are three main sub groups for secondary data, they are documentary data, and survey based data, data compiled from multiple sources.

Both primary and secondary data collection methods were used for the study. The questions were asked during the interviews according to the situation, content and people. The questions

were framed in accordance with the objective and hypothesis of the research. The interviewees were selected by the random sampling techniques as well as according to their knowledge. That is, the personnel who were available and accessible during that period were reached to receive information.

The secondary data was collected from the peer reviewed academic articles and textbooks, articles in the press and journals. Since conflicts and violence among ethnic communities is a sensitive issue, the privacy, confidentiality, and safety of the subjects were protected throughout the processes of data collection.

3.4   Data Analysis

This research applies the content analysis to analyze the primary and secondary data collected from interviews and various other literature. In general, content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" Krippendorff (2013:24). This analysis helps the researchers to generate new concepts and theories and also to test the hypothesis. In this research, this analysis is used to identify and document the attitudes, views, and interests of individuals, small groups and diverse culturally different ethnic communities and to evaluate and compare the objective of interview data.

Drisco and Maschi (2016) introduce three approaches, basic, interpretative and qualitative to content analysis. "Basic content analyses are those approaches using word counts and other quantitative analytic methods to analyze data" (Drisco and Maschi, 2016:3). Holsti defines interpretative content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics of messages" (Drisco and Maschi, 2016:3). This research generated summaries examine the collected data in a systematic way and interpreted in a transparent manner. This approach also assisted to identify the epistemological issues during the data analysis.

Qualitative content analysis as "an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within the context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models" (Drisco and Maschi, 2016:6). This approach supported categorizing, systematizing, organizing and structuring the collected data under selected themes in the way of carefully focusing the chosen research questions. Qualitative content analysis is an approach used by scholars like Mayring (2000) to analyze newly collected data sets based on interviews.

In this background, qualitative and interpretative content analysis methods are used in identifying the patterns of various aspects of the research issue. These analysis methods emphasize context and have a need for interpretation of the researcher. Qualitative content analysis applying constructivist epistemology while interpretative content analysis bring forth positivist or realist epistemological positions. These two approaches assist the researchers to emphasize, in specific contexts, on describing the meaning of communications narratively as well as descriptively, without having any statistical analyses. Further, the main purpose here is to organize the data and describe them. The "interpretive or qualitative approaches to content analysis require carefully defined and transparently reported descriptions of how the researchers collected, coded, and analyzed the target materials. All good content analysis must be systematic, methodologically based, and transparently reported" (Drisco and Maschi, 2016:4).

Though there are differences in the above mentioned approaches, Drisco and Maschi (2016:6) concluded that "content analysis is a structured research approach, using specified research designs and methods, to make replicable and valid inferences from texts and similar materials." In this understanding of the content analysis the interviews were thematised emphasizing the core content of the message/information that the interviewees shared.

In this background, the data is thematised to discuss how the reinterpretation of Islamic fundamental values leads to radicalization the Sinhala Ethnocratic-nationalism with organized groups such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) against Muslims. In this study the data is organized to discuss the decline of *Sufism* and Emergence of *Salafism* or *Wahhabism*; what sort of teachings dominated the Muslim community, what sort of Muslim ideological group have power and who are the majority in number as well as what type of Islamic ideology guiding the Muslims to behave in the way of nonviolence, violence and middle path.

Further, this research thematised the data to examine the challenges faced by the Muslims during violence against them by the extremist Sinhala Buddhist ethnocratic nationalists and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam. Here the data is systematised to study how the minority community negotiate with the Sinhala political leaders in a tense situations; what is the nature of the political power of the minority; how the nature of dispersion of the Muslim community in between the Sinhala community is avoid the further escalation of the riots in the country; how the state security forces manage to implement the law and order; were the communities

satisfied with the role of the Police bringing the ethnic violence to end; what were the role of Sinhala and Muslim political leaders in bringing peace and how they responded to their voters.

This research also thematised the data to analyse the practical issues, such as protection of women, businessmen, gang group attacks, stealing and damaging properties, faced by the communities in riot situations and spread of the violence and the protection of other fellow community members.

The thesis has made an attempt to thematised the data to explore why do the Muslims choose nonviolent means to manage the riots and what kind of decision-making processes have resulted in this strategy. Under this theme, the data is organised to study how the Muslim people were guided, in accordance to the basic religious scriptures, by the *Sufi* Masters to live in a multi-ethic country; how Muslims legitimize their nonviolent reaction though they were violently attacked; what are the different suggestions, who were in favour of the nonviolence response and who oppose it; what were the alternative suggestions; what were the pros and cons arguments presented during the negotiations; what kind of network they used; were the the demographic and geographic reason and power relations between the minority and the majority imp acted in nonviolence response; how the terms such as *Jihad* is interpreted; how voting behaviours of the Muslim community influenced; who were the people participated the in the negotiations and what was the role of Islamic movements and the youth during the decision making process and any women participation in decision making process.

Finally, the study thematised the challenges that the Muslim leaders faced in implementing non-violent strategies. Here the data is structured to study the role of Muslim political leaders belongs to Muslim political parties and national political parties; how they satisfied the affected people and their families and is there any politicization of the issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Results I: Factors of Ethnic Tension and Conflicts / Riots: The past and the Present

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the two research questions of how did the ethnic tension and resulting conflicts / riots evolved historically between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims in Sri Lanka and what were the factors that caused the ethnic tension resulting in conflicts / riots between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims in Sri Lanka. This Chapter examines firstly, the historical evolvement of the conflicts / riots, and secondly the situation the Muslims had to face during the conflict between the Government and the LTTE which fought for a separate country for ethnic Tamil Community. The final section examines factors that cause the tension resulting from conflicts and riots from time to time.

4.1   Historical Evolvement of the Conflicts / Riots

4.1.1   The Muslim Community in Sri Lanka

The Muslim community is a very small portion of the Sri Lankan community, a little over 9% of the population, and is ill-placed to make any demands of the majority, which is about 70% of the community. Also, given the protracted war that the country has gone through, it is no longer possible or desirable to tread the violent path. Add to this the cultural prejudices of the Sinhalese community against them, and the Muslim community is placed in an unenviable position. The Muslim community faces hurdles due to their minority status in a country where Sinhalese is the majority community. While the Muslim community is not homogenous (with many sects and backgrounds), in general matters, they provide a united front, and lean on their religious identity rather than their language or historical identity (Nuhman, 2007).

Esman and Rabinovich quoted in Kymlicka and Pföstl (2014:77), "argue that whether theorists apply primordialist and instrumentalist theories of integration and conflict models to the problems of minorities …, all scholars agree that at the core of minorities' conflicts lie the quest for power, wealth, hegemony, security and status." This is true regarding the Muslims too. They are in search of a recognised status for themselves, and they seek power in the mainstream politics to ensure their security from the all kind of attacks of the majority community against them. However, in trying to arrive at any solution to a violent situation, the Muslim community must first look at nonviolent responses. Their situation is worsened by

some issues: the dispersion of the community, the inability of the police force to take their side or be fair and equal, political situation and finally the expectations of the majority community. This situation placed the Muslim community vulnerable and find difficulties how to direct them by themselves. The lack of any real power means that the Muslim community is ill equipped to deal with the violence aimed at them, and this majority-minority power struggle has led to extremely dire situations.

4.1.2 Business Acumen of Muslims

Even from early history, Muslims were identified as a business community. Nuhman (2007) sets out the history of the Sri Lankan Muslims as having come from various areas including India, and they all had trade in common. He says that the Muslims did not hold the same wealth as they do now, but that they made a life from selling. Slowly, some of the Muslims made their way up the social ladder and started building an elite class. They then distinguished between themselves and those who were less well off. However, they had rarely depended on the state for a better life. Due to the increasing economic development through economic ties with China and many other countries, many Muslims in Sri Lanka have now become rich. In addition, the middle class has increased.

The Muslims are known for their business acumen and their success has been watched with both admiration and envy. This envy has transformed into violence against Muslims in some instances. Due to make their living through business, the Muslim community has factually come under fire in certain instances, as evidenced by the attacks on No Limit and Fashion Bug, the leading businesses shops belongs to the Muslim entrepreneurs. Competition between businesses and the business owners has led to animosity between the communities. The majority community has taken out its frustrations on the minority community, which it sees as encroaching on their business and economic areas. In trying to eke out a living in a tough economy, the majority feels that the minority has usurped the opportunities that they should have had. This leads to bad blood between the communities, and the ultimate reaction is violence against the usurper. In this kind of situation, it is possible to escalate the tension between the majority and minority communities and then the economy of the minority has been targeted and their business places being attacked or asked to close down. Previously, these conflicts were managed through ethnic and religious harmony. They discussed matters with the Buddhist monks and solved any issues, and only then discussed matters with the right politicians. Therefore, they have never been identified as extremists or fundamentalists.

4.2 Challenges Faced by Muslims during the War between the LTTE and the State

This section examines five aspects resulting from the conflict between the LTTE and the State. The dispersion of the Muslims, which weakened them and separated them from each other. So they might have different issues based on the area they reside. The role of police: how have the police behaved towards them in times of stress and what is the attitude of the Muslims towards the state tool. These questions are addressed in this section in terms of the attacks by the Sinhala ethnocratic nationalists as well as the LTTE. The third aspect is the Muslim community and their business, their main mode of earning a living. The section analyses how business was affected during the war and the riots. The way politicians engage in and help their voters during the violence is considered next. Finally, the theme of violence, conflict and the Muslim, is examined in terms of the effect of violence on Muslims.

4.2.1 Dispersion of Muslim Minority in Sri Lanka

The Muslim minority is dispersed over many locations in the island, living also within Sinhala towns. However, in the East, they live in the places where they are the majority. Dharga Town in Aluthgama is a place with huge number of Muslims are living in between Sinhala villages, and there are many small Muslim villages (Maggona, Viyangalla, Neboda, Welipenna, Viyangalla and Palanda etc…) close to Dharga Town are situated within the areas where the Sinhalese are majority. This type of dispersion has broken-down their community and their issues are different from village to village and town to town. The Colombo Muslim community has a different set of issues rather than the community in Negombo. Thus, the dispersion increases the challenges for the community.

This also meant that during the war, one section of the community was caught between the government soldiers protecting the majority's rights and the LTTE protecting those of the next largest majority. As a minority, Muslims were ill placed, often finding themselves at the mercy of both sides. As one of the Senior Academic (Interview 1) says: Muslims were violently attacked by both the Sinhalese in the South and the Tamils in the East. Sinhalese of course did not kill Muslims in any of the riots but the military and the police of course killed the Muslims. But the Tamil militant groups killed the Muslims even in the Mosques.

These kind of riots and killings further distressed the Muslim community, e.g., they were placed in IDP camps in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces.

Toft (2003:32) argues that when an ethnic group demands independence and the state refuses, 'ethnic war is almost certain to occur', and this has been shown in the Sri Lankan context by the LTTE's fight against the Sri Lanka Government. However, the Muslims have not yet chosen any kind of violent reactions as a response to the violent attack of the Sinhala ethnocratic nationalists against the Muslims. They still have a trust in the Sinhala political leadership and the political system of the country.

4.2.2 The Role of the Police

Generally, Muslims believe that the police support only the Sinhalese people and that the Muslim community is sidelined. In the 1994 Kaleel Place riot, only Muslims were shot although the Sinhalese people attacked them. They lost 4 lives because they were rowdy and uncontrolled after the attack. This is similar to the Aluthgama riot, where the firing controlled the riots. Also, it is of no use asking for support from the police because the police cannot be seen to help the Muslims. They need to be seen supporting the majority because of partisan politics and the minority/majority divide. This situation compels Muslims to be nonviolent in their responses, which seems to be the only option open to the Muslims.

In addition to this lack of options, Muslim women's protection also becomes a problem: the Muslim community cannot be sure that their women will be safe. They must always grapple with the fear that they might be raped. This is exacerbated by the aversion to their clothing: The *Hijab* and *Abhaya* have come under fire from the majority because of the way it covers the face. Thus, a woman who wears either runs the risk of being targeted based on their clothing. This suspicion held true even during the LTTE times, with the Muslims unable to trust the police. However, the Muslim community on the whole cooperated with the government (Farook, 2014:17) to defeat the separatists, a fact that is borne out by the numbers of Muslim officers that have been lost (including Colonel Mutaliff)[22] and hidden in the current general discourse because of the self-serving rhetoric of the previous government.

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[22] Lt. Col Tuan Nizam Muthaliff was the former (Muslim) Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion Military Intelligence Corps. He was an officer with whose guidance and insights, several successful military operations to attack strategic locations of the LTTE were staged. (https://www.army.lk/news/major-muthaliff-remembered)

4.3   Causes for the Tension

4.3.1   Observed Radicalization

The reinterpretation of Islamic fundamental values lead to radicalizing the Sinhala Ethnocratic nationalism. The background reasons for violence against Muslims consist of racism in Sri Lanka manifested in activities of ethnocratic Sinhala Buddhist organizations such as Sihala Rawaya, Rawana Balaya, and *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS). Among these groups, BBS reacted hardest against the recently emerged culturally changing behavior of the Muslim community. Issuance of halal certificates, wearing clothes that cover the face and the head, increasing mosques, emergence and spread of *Wahhabism* and the increasing bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie among Muslims were the identified issues that were addressed publicly by the BBS and other Sinhala ethno-nationalist organizations against the Muslims.[23]

Two key reasons for targeting ethnic Muslims were the perceived radicalization of the community, evidenced by multiple attacks around the world, and their business acumen that poses a threat to the majority. As Griffel (2015:189) says, "Muslim fundamentalists aim at controlling the authority that a modern nation state concentrates and use it to turn the semi-secular societies of the Muslim world in ones that reflect "truly Islamic" values." This is what the majority fears. While in Sri Lanka this radicalization has not existed in the past, it is seen that the process has begun recently. The budding radicalization is affecting (or promoting) the violence aimed at them.

4.3.2   Perception of the Extreme Sinhalese

Former Chief Executive Officer of the Bodu Bala Sena, says (Interview 12) that they are "fully against the spread of *Wahhabism* and the Middle Eastern culture in Sri Lanka." He says that, "Nowadays the Muslim youth is becoming very extreme and they involve in violence" and that the "ACJU is not a genuine organization, they are partial. They are the reason for all these kinds of misunderstanding between the Sinhalese and the Muslims. Muslim people are the reason for the emergence of extreme groups among the Sinhalese. They do not know their limits. In the last two decades they behaved very badly, I mean the *Wahhabi* radical groups." His view is that of the extreme Sinhalese person, and points to the level of mistrust in Sri

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[23] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fPMWD8f9lE

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Lankan society. Extremism is a concern for many people around the world and seems to be at the forefront of people's minds in Sri Lanka too.

Issues around the world with Muslim extremism have brought in a new interpretation of the act of *Jihad* (Arabic: struggle). In any reference to a violent act by a Muslim, or a converted Muslim, the term *Jihad* is bandied about, and the term is used to mean a war or a struggle against enemies of Islam. However, the term, which is abundantly seen in the *Quran*, means a struggle against one's ego. However, this term is misinterpreted by the various radical Islamic groups in the way fight for the spreading Islam/fight against the non-Muslims and the guidance and the behaviours based on this interpretation of the term *Jihad*, Muslim community themselves placed them in a vulnerable situation.

4.3.3   Increasing Numbers of Mosques

Sufism did not focus on increasing the numbers of mosques in the country. They had one mosque each in the Muslim areas, and for a long time shared the space with other orders of Islam. It was common practice to demarcate days for sects thus allowing all sects' access to the population without increasing the physical structures. However, this has changed in the present with the advent of the many sects of Islam. Each builds their own mosque and it is now increasingly common to see 3 or 4 mosques dotting one village or city, even though the Muslim population has not increased. In Kalutara, now there are 4 mosques where there was only one, but the population remains the same. This increase will lead to (and has in the past) fears in the majority community about violence from the Muslim community. Building more religious spaces in a small area – when the population is a minority – is a problematic practice as it can result in both sectarian violence or dissent and in violence between the majority and minority communities.

Wherever possible, *Sufi* mosques, which used to share spaces with other sects, have now been taken over by other sects. In Kalutara, there are four mosques in the *Sufi* line: two *Shazuliya*, one *Alaviya,* and two *Nakshabandiya*, all of which belonged to the *Sufi* order. Except the Alawiya mosque, all others have been taken by the Tableek *Jamath*. Formerly, the *Jummah* ceremony in the Mosque was shared every other week between Alaviya and Nakshabandiya orders where the imam preached *huthba.* These sects have now encroached on and grabbed the mosque, relegating the *Sufi* order to the back. However, when it is not possible or when the mosque is still largely *Sufism*-based, these sects have built new mosques nearby, and these mosques are movement-based, thus dividing the community. The same number of the

population is now divided into sects, some increasingly extremist. It is not that much appreciated in Islam to build many mosques. However, in Sri Lanka, the increasing number of sectarian divisions has led to building their own mosques their own and this increased the number of mosques even in small villages. This situation also caused distress among the Sinhalese about the Muslims and led to tensions between the two communities.

In "Paranoia & Paralysis: The Buddhist-Muslim Tragicomedy," Ali (2016) draws attention to the same issues: To take the first issue, it is true that Muslims in Sri Lanka, like in many other parts of the world, have become at least outwardly more Islamic since the 1980s as demonstrated by their increased punctiliousness in observing religious rituals and in organizing and promoting religiously inspired gatherings, conferences and other such activities. These large gatherings naturally called for a parallel increase in the number of religious centers such as mosques and madrasas. Quantitatively and qualitatively the number of mosques in Sri Lanka has increased, but to decide whether that increase is disproportionate when compared to the increase in Hindu Temples, Christian Churches and Buddhist *Vihares* statistical evidence is required. Neither the paranoid mob nor the Muslim community has so far provided such comparative data.

Commonly the *Jummah* mosques are named *Muhiyaddeen*. *Muhiyaddeen* was the *Sufi* master of the *Qadiri* order and these mosques were of the *Sufi* order. There were *Muhiyaddeen* mosques spanning the island and serving the Muslim population. However, now, this situation has changed and there are many mosques exceeding the population of the area and they have separated the public mosques from their own mosques where they practiced their own different rituals. Previously there was one mosque and many rituals. Now, there are many mosques and an even larger number of rituals.

Currently, there is a *Wahhabi* mosque and six other newly built mosques in Kalutara. The reasons for these numerous mosques are multiple but one of the main reasons in contemporary society is the establishment of an identity, both for the mosque and for some community members. Some mosques are built for the personal establishment of some newly emerged bourgeoisie. However, this leads to further fragmentation of the Muslim Community territorially and organization-wise. These are new forms of Muslim community fragmentation. However, what Islam wants is to build up an *Ummah*. This was done by the *Sufi* orders in the previous centuries, where the community was tight-knit and led by one main order.

Earlier the division was based on the different ways the rituals were practiced by different *Sufi* orders. This divided the community ritually but maintained solidarity among each other as they followed one order and engaged in communal activities, such as visiting each other's grand feasts, etc. However, now, there are many factions and different practices and thus there is no unity in the community. They are divided by belief as much as by practice.

4.3.4 Middle Eastern Influences

In addition to the Saudi Arabian and Middle Eastern influence, the Sri Lankan Muslim community has another influence. With the increased economic ties with China, and the constant travel between the countries, there has been some new development in this area too. With the establishment of a new bourgeoisie that is made rich through the economic ties with China, there has been increased activity in building mosques: These merchants and businessmen then build new mosques close to their homes and become community leaders through the influence they wield over the Trustee Board. Thus, the increase in mosques has also been seen as an increase in community leaders that may not have the best interest of the community at heart. Thus, there is increased division in the country's Muslim population, driven by the increase in mosques. This is direct opposition to what was practiced by the *Sufi* order, which was building solidarity in the community. This fragmentation is detrimental to the community.

When questioned, many in the list of interviews were of the opinion that Sri Lanka did not need a large number of mosques. They felt that the increase in the number of mosques was a way to get money from people and they were disappointed. However, a few of those questioned said that Sri Lanka needed such an increase in mosques. The positive arguments for increasing numbers of mosques were justified by referring to the spread of neo-liberal capitalism and globalization. Also, they said that people do not have much time in the present era and they are always busy. Therefore, they seek mosques very close to their residence.

This increasing number of mosques has created also fear among the Sinhalese people about the spread of radical Islam in the country, and this fear is fueled by the spread of Al-Qaida and the IS as well as the role of Taliban, which are already reasons why people fear Islam and Muslims. This in turn leads to violence against the Muslims initiated by the majority community. This process is a vicious cycle, and one that needs breaking.

4.3.5   Role of *Jammiyyathul Ulama*

In talking about the mosques, it is also important to talk about the *Jammiyyathul Ulama*: What role do they have in the new Muslim community? What influence does it have? What does it do? Why do they promote these new laws and what is their role in the promulgation of these laws? Some of the respondents were of the opinion that the *Jammiyyathul Ulama* had overstepped boundaries and were encroaching areas that are not of their concern. This trend of *Jammiyyathul Ulama* is a problem for the majority community. *Jammiyyathul Ulama*'s role in implementing unsuitable sharia law such as, urging to cover the face of the women in the country inspires fear in people of this country and a number of Muslims reject their instructions in this matter indicating those teachings as of their hardline approach. Some responded that this kind of their guidance and preaches can be likened to that of IS, and lead to have violence in the country. Also, the Muslims in the country, traditionally, are guided by the *Sufi* leaders, and this guidance paved the way for the Muslims to live in a country where they are minority.

The lack of knowledge and insufficient resources about the Islam, and various Islamic movements and their ideologies might have misguided the non-Muslim politicians. This could be lead them to wrongly comment about the entire Muslim population. Wijedasa Rajapaksa, a prominent politician, has been in the news (Colombo Telegraph, 2016c) with accusations, "that the foreign Islamic scholars who come to Islamic international schools in Sri Lanka are teaching terrorist views to Muslim students in order to wash their brains towards terrorism." This is an instance of politicians being cavalier with communal sensibilities. Such generalized comments can spark anger against the Muslim community. Politicians cannot afford to be cavalier about their words. In an already vulnerable situation where hardliners are pushing for violence and dissent, when politicians also jump on the bandwagon, there is a possibility that things can escalate far too soon.

In a contrary note, Ali (2016) says, "It is true that a few misguided Sri Lankan Muslim youth has joined the ISIS bloody caliphate, but that doesn't in any way indicate that the Muslim community here is conspiring to create an ISIS vilayet." In defense of the Muslims, he also says: "However, to tie these outward appearances and elements of religious fundamentalism with a hidden Muslim political agenda, as alleged by the paranoid Buddhist rabble, is mischievous, malevolent and at times sounds comical. At no time in the history of Sri Lanka did the Muslims even contemplate to bring the country under Muslim rule. Even after

independence while the Tamils were aspiring and fighting for a separate state the Muslim community uninterruptedly worked as political partners with the majority community."

However, it must be understood that the *Jammiyyathul Ulama* has had some hard approaches. It was *Jammiyyathul Ulama* that pushed companies to get the Halal certificate in covert ways. Also, they had hidden charges attached to the certificate. This is a corrupt way of ensuring Halal. In the past, the *Sufi* leaders ensured that their Halal requirements were met, with the least difficulties to the majority community, through having Muslims slaughter the cows to be eaten and by having Muslim butchers. They did not push their beliefs onto the other communities or pressure them. This method is thought to have worked well. In general, the Muslims seem to be in favor of working with the majority community rather than against them.

This is borne out by the words of a senior Academic of the University of Moratuwa (Interview 5): "I think, if we go through the proper channel to get the halal certificates, the Sinhalese people will accept it, definitely. We must respect the culture and values of this country. Sinhalese people give lots of respect to the Buddhist monks, we also respect them. We must consult them before we introduce certain things according to our culture." However, the *Jammiyyathul Ulama* is in direct opposition to this practice with their pressure on the companies and the hidden costs that can be misused.

4.3.6 Extremism: Halal Certificates

The recent issue over the Halal certificates has been a major consideration for the entire country. The Halal certificate has created much conflict in society because it places undue importance on a legal aspect that was not relevant to the Buddhist and other communities of the country. Also, the certificate itself was an import: This was not part of the Sri Lankan Muslim culture till it was imported from the Arabic countries. This foreign concept was met with much dissent from the other communities, especially given that the certificates were issued based on payment.

This certificate became essential because without the Halal certificate, the Muslim community would not buy products, so even though they are less than 10% of the community, the Muslims held sway and most companies had to buy this certificate, which raised the wrath of the other religious leaders. This certificate was not only for meals and food products. Even mineral water came under fire because of a particular mineral that is thought to have been part of the human anatomy prior to being used in the cleansing process.

These rigid practices are in direct opposition to those practiced by the *Sufi*s who cooperated with the Sinhalese majority and their government so that they could cohabit peacefully. Their approach was to assimilate to a country, being respectful of the majority community's laws and practices. This was why the Muslim community was welcomed in Sri Lanka for such an extended period. Their rigid laws were about the meat and the related recitations, not about mineral water and other products being made for consumer consumption. In fact, they solved their issues with coorporation and collaboration, engaging equally with the government and the community.

However, now, there are many mosques, sometimes three or four dotting the same area, which leads to problems as the teachings have now become somewhat more hardliner-centric, and the move is towards a less conciliatory tone. This can create problems in the country because with all the pressures exerted by the mosques, the Muslim community will become less interested in cohabiting and more interested in forming their own communities, and the majority community will look on them with suspicion leading to violence. An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot (Interview 10) also speaks of this: He says that the basic reasons for Aluthgama riot are four-fold: Increasing Muslim population in the country; Increases in Madrasas and Mosques; Development of Muslims' businesses, and Clothes imported from the Middle East.

He says that, "Because of all these reasons they (the Sinhalese) think that soon this country will be a Muslim Country. But personally, I think we must limit building mosques and madrasas unnecessarily and also, we could live according to Sharia law by wearing our national dresses. Therefore, we do not need the Middle Eastern or Arab way of dressing." This is extremely pertinent to the thesis. The research has shown that indeed these four reasons are seen by many, from both communities, to be problematic and they believe that the four factors affect the way the communities see each other.

4.3.7 Extremism: *Hijab*

As mentioned previously, in ancient times, the Muslim community co-existed with the majority communities and did not insist on having their own customs and laws circumvent those of the majority community. Muslims in Sri Lanka wore clothes in the traditional method of the Sinhalese or the Tamils, and covered what needed to be covered as they saw fit. However, now, the *Hijab* and *Abhaya* have made their presence felt, and Muslim women have become synonymous with these two styles.

This style came to Sri Lanka through the Middle East. The *hijab* was of help in the Middle East because of both its religious background and the environmental conditions. This was then replicated in Sri Lanka by those who went to the Middle East to work. They brought back this trend and it was appropriated by the masses and the religious leaders. This was a case of appropriating another culture and belief. This is aided and abetted by the spread of the movement of *Thableek Jamath,* so much so that even school children cover their faces at school. This is unnecessary but has spread because of the extremism of some factions. Such factions even read the *Quran* with specific references to the garb: they interpret the *Quran* with reference to this particular dress.

However, this is a new trend and not a part of the *Sufi* tradition, which was the main source of Muslim knowledge and customs in Sri Lanka for many centuries. *Sufi* tradition introduced the Sri Lankan Muslim woman to wear the saree and other Sri Lankan clothing to cover what needed to be covered. They did not introduce Middle Eastern cultural garb to Sri Lanka but recognized the importance of assimilating and using the local attire within the confines of their traditions. This is why the Muslims of the previous centuries managed to co-exist with the Sinhalese.

The trend was exacerbated by the spread of *Wahhabism* in Sri Lanka: *Thoheed Jamath* built many mosques in Sri Lanka in the 1990s to establish their name and identity, and this was done through money from Saudi Arabia. An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot (Interview 10) says, "the spread of *Wahhabism* is the main reason to increase mosques and madrasas in the country. They are very extreme. They want to take the leadership of the Muslims in the country. They are getting money from *Wahhabi* nongovernmental organizations and they have revealed this themselves in a debate with a sect which separated from them." In fact, the *Wahhabists* inform to Saudi Arabian religious leaders that Sri Lanka had a version of Islam that was not original and asked for money to increase mosques. This led to a larger presence of people following the Saudi Arabian and Middle Eastern versions of Islam, and a higher focus on the *hijab* and the *abhaya* for the women.

The Muslim community, including its youth, are aware of this: Islam did not teach to wear Abaya, but asked the women to reduce the attraction since it is a danger for their security. In an interview one said that the "Muslim women can cover the head with a shawl. They never had a problem in covering head with shawl, they had problems when they started to wear *hijab*, which is imported from the Middle East. They do not need to cover their face, especially in a

country like Sri Lanka where the Muslims are a minority. We do not need the culture of the Middle East, we need a Islamic Culture, which is possible to follow through the Sri Lankan way of clothing" (Interview 7).

4.3.8 Emergence and Spread of *Wahhabism*

Wahhabism emerged in 1744 in Central Arabia (Griffel, 2015), in the 1990s it spread in Sri Lanka. Even though there is only about a 1% Muslim population following *Wahhabism* in Sri Lanka, this population has been at the center of the violence. Most of the Muslim religious leaders, scholars and many others agreed that the peaceful survival of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka is under hazard due to preaching, political activism and violent reactions of the *Wahhabits* and they are severely criticized. A sentiment was echoed in the group interview with the members of *Jamath-e-Islami* that the "radical behaviour of the *Wahhabits* always being a threat to the peaceful existence of the entire community of the island. The recently emerged *Wahhabi* Movements are a threat to our ethnic harmony with the Sinhalese people" (Interview 7).

The followers of *Wahhabism* carry out rallies and protests in Sri Lanka and the recent protest has been against Muslim Personal Law as it exists in the country. The Sharia law about marriage is that a girl on attaining puberty can marry, and *Wahhabi* followers wish to revert to this. The related *Sufi* method (that was in practice in the past) was connected to Muslim personal law, which is derived from the legal process agreed between the community and the legal entities of the country and is influenced by the laws of the country they are in. They made hate speeches (such as that Buddha ate human meat, calling a priest *ponna sara*, etc.) against Sinhalese Buddhists.

Wahhabi followers, who urge the people to follow the *Quran* and *Hadees*, wish to read and interpret the *Quran* in the ways that this was interpreted by the extremists such as Ibn Thaymiyyah, Nasiruddeen Albany and Seyyed Kuthub. This trend of religious guidance paved the way to misguide the Muslim community in the country which resulted increase the extremism in the country in the name of Islam. The *Wahhabits* allow the (age limited) child marriage to happen even though the *Quran* does not mention an age for women to get married at. Early marriage is not an Islamic law but a Muslim personal law. In the early times, people generally married at younger ages and marrying at puberty was a choice. However, this no longer holds true in the current time, which is why many are agitating for reforms to the Muslim

Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA). Muslim leaders resolved this issue in early times with compromise and discussion, and won political recognition. In recent times, there has been an outcry about the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act because these *Wahhabi* followers have asked for laws to be kept that allow marriage to girls less than 12 years of age. This has been met with disgust and dissent from both the intelligentsia and the general public.

4.3.9   The Response of the Muslim Intelligentsia

In the article titled "Sri Lankan Muslim Clerics Ignoring Reality of Muslims, Reforms Held Hostage: MPLRAG[24]" in the Colombo Telegraph (2017c) the signatories say, "We are deeply disappointed that the 2009 MPL Reforms Committee chaired by Justice Saleem Marsoof continues to permit the deliberations on reform to be delayed and allows itself to be held hostage in this unreasonable manner by a few extremist members who do not represent all the Muslims in the country."

In addition, they draw attention to the fact that the Muslim political leaders have remained silent throughout this process, which they feel have repercussions that extend to all sections of the Muslim community and call on the state to protect the rights of all by ensuring Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act is reformed. The signatories further say that "We are appalled at the continued silence of Muslim political leaders to the statements issued and documents released by the ACJU. Their lackadaisical attitude towards and lack of leadership in addressing the Muslim personal law reforms is prolonging the injustices faced by Muslim women and girls. As a result of their silence we believe we are in danger of letting the thinking of unelected and unrepresentative organizations that take positions based on narrow and literal interpretations of the Islamic text and tradition to determine the future of the Sri Lankan Muslim community" (Colombo Telegraph, 2017c).

The outcry is in response to the statements made by the ACJU, which has firstly condoned marriage to girl children younger than 12 years based on the contract of marriage between Prophet Muhammed and Aisha who was 6 years at the time, and secondly spoken against female judges in *Qazi* courts saying that her edicts will be not binding as per the Sharia and will therefore be null and void (Colombo Telegraph, 2017a).

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[24] Muslim Personal Law Reform Action Group. https://mplreforms.com/about/

The ACJU then reversed its standpoint on the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act but mainly in terms of reforms being needed of the *Qazi* courts. According to the article titled "Sri Lankan Muslim Clerics Revert Stance on MMDA Reform; But No Mention of Child Marriage" that appeared in the Colombo Telegraph (2017b) on 3rd April, the ACJU has not issued a reversed standpoint on the matter of girl children and early marriages or on the matter of women clerics. While it calls for equal and just treatment for all, the article argues that the ACJU does not specifically mention the two issues, and questions this skirting of the main problems. The letter, quoted in the article, says that "ACJU as a responsible institution has to look into various aspects, inter alia … (2) finding solutions to the grievances of the women; …" thus not specifically mentioning the grievances of the women. They focus attention to how the ACJU is aware of grievances and emphasize that women will be accorded the honor and respect Islam has bestowed on them.

Gitanjalie Marcelline, writing to the Colombo Telegraph says, "with the changing times, the need has arisen to bring about reforms to the MMDA, taking into consideration fundamental rights of girls and women, especially their right to education without being married off at an early age, their right to equal autonomy and decision-making in entering into their own marriages, divorces, the women's and children's right to maintenance, to name a few" (Marcelline, 2017). She engages with the concepts of justice and equality spouted by the ACJU and says that "both components need to be in the new Act: 'the state must get involved in Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act reforms and ensure Equality, Justice and Non-discrimination to all its citizens, including Muslim Men, Women and Children. With the constitution of Sri Lanka, in Chapter III, under Fundamental Rights, addressing the component Right to Equality 12. (1), it is its bounden duty/responsibility to assist with the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act reforms.'" However, article 12 does not order for enacting laws.

An International Political Analyst and Lobbyist said that "it does not seem that the religious leaders take issues related to MMDA seriously. They use common Muslim issues for their own benefit, such as gaining a name from the other Muslims and increasing their funds from abroad. It is not clear why they support this agenda since it is not according to the *Quran* and *Sunnah*" (Interview 2) The group interview highlighted that even the Muslim scholars are sometimes guilty of this practice: "Some Muslim scholars argue that they have to wear the dresses of others without affecting the Sharia when live with other communities/nationalities, sometimes it is a must" (Interview 7). These arguments of the scholars are in contrast to others, and one

must wonder why the scholars proclaim these new rules. However, many *Sufi* followers are in favor of the amendments considering the context (Interview 24).

4.3.10 Business Acumen of Muslims

In Ethnic Partition under the League of Nations (Chenoweth and Lawrence, 2010:137), Jenne says minorities face disproportionate obstacles when setting up businesses and in conducting the business (as happened with the Turks in Greece in the 1960s) and this holds true for the Sri Lankan Muslim community, as evidence by the torching of No Limit in the last few years. The Muslim community has always been business-oriented. They do not depend on the state for their welfare or economies, but create their own opportunities. They have traditionally engaged in selling *goraka* (brindle berry), areca nut, etc. During the war, their trade was disrupted because of the war taking place in the North and East that effectively divided the country. It was sometimes geographically impossible to get to the market or the resources. In the present, they must source these products from Sinhala cities. This puts their safety in jeopardy. There have been instances where Muslim people have been asked to alight from the bus on the way home from Colombo, and they have been beaten up. This is because the road from Colombo is dotted with Sinhala towns and the Sinhalese people sometimes give into the mob mentality when faced with conflict. In some instances, onlookers also joined the fray and looting and damaging properties, taking advantage of the situation.

The Muslim community finds it hard to come out of this cage: They are caged because they cannot allow the spread of violence to neighboring areas and they must protect their fellow community members: They cannot attack the majority community because the Sinhalese in Colombo will then attack the Muslims around the country. Thus, they resort to nonviolence. As a Muslim businessman points out, this is an unnecessary riot. Some newly emerged Sinhalese business men like ASB, CIB and Rich Look do not like the development of the business of the Muslims, they do not like the big shops like Fashion Bug, Nolimit, or Last Chance. However, Sinhalese people still have not stopped buying from the Muslim shops. Muslims are the major business people in the country. We are doing business mainly for the Sinhalese people, they are peaceful. But some politicians want to make their feelings felt against the Muslims. However, it did not succeed yet. The main reason is our nonviolent behavior and the peaceful behavior of our predecessors (Interview 22).

4.3.11 Politics and Violence

The politicians too cannot offer any solace because the majority community demand that the politicians be on the side of them and not the minority. Due to this, the Muslim politicians must also be on the side of the majority and must attempt to keep their people calm. They must call for peace and harmony, and not for justice to victims of violence. While there are politicians who do feel that there has been some injustice, they cannot voice these opinions for fear of losing their voter base. Thus, the political system of the country keeps a space open for racial violence that can go unchecked.

Muslim leaders sometimes do pander to their own needs rather than those of their constituents, and only speak rhetoric. As Rauff (2016) says, "The talks of North-East merger/demerger have been a political exercise perennially brandished by Tamil political leaders and at times their Muslim counterparts when they have nothing in their hands to deliver to their respective communities". The Tamil and Sinhala political leaders together discussed issues related to their communities in areas where the majority is the Muslim community. In this situation the Muslim political leaders are compelled themselves to calm down their voters living in such areas. However, even when they are not guaranteed their own lands, such as in the East, the Muslim leaders do not always get involved. This is a problem not only in this community but in all. Politicians do not always have the best interests of the voter at heart, but will even incite violence or dissent among communities when their power is in jeopardy as can be seen in the two instances below.

In the first instance, Gnanasara Thero is on record on an article in the Colombo Telegraph (2016a) saying, "If these politicians only gave us a little backing we can end the rise of the Muslims," and "Sometimes, I feel like taking a T-56 and do what Prabhakaran did, but I can't do it because I am in robes" (2016a). These are comments that can incite violence in reaction, especially given his own violent history inciting violence in Aluthgama. In the second instance, he joined in the controversial statements by Dan Priyasad, aka the Saviour of the Sinhalese, who says "if necessary (they) have all the necessities to kill the Muslims…" (Colombo Telegraph, 2016b).

According to an eyewitness's report (Interview 8), the Dharga Town riots were political and planned: "It was a well-planned attack against our community by BBS and Gotabaya Rajapaksha. The people who were involved in this violence are from the military. They were

Army personnel. No one involved in the violence against Muslims was from this area. All are outsiders. It is a wonder how they could gather that many people that soon."

This situation is exacerbated when the president of the country does not act to solve the issue, but talks to the masses of the majority. If he does not condemn the violence, it can escalate quickly because the police and the politicians will be on the side of the president. This is what happened in Aluthgama too. Farook (2014) gives many articles that say that the president merely Tweeted 2 posts each in English and Sinhala, and 3 in Tamil referencing the incident, but did not condemn the attacks or say that the perpetrators will be brought to justice. This inaction and lackadaisical approach are precisely why the politicians of the Muslim community were helpless and could not support their people. Even when they did speak up, they were told to keep quiet (Farook, 2014, 30). Keeping all these in mind, they chose nonviolent responses because it was impractical to call for violent solutions to the conflict. Also, nonviolent responses (as proposed by Nursi in his many teachings) have been a viable option in the past around the world.

The interviewees were cognizant of the workings of politics, and that politicians manipulate conditions: In interview 23, individuals of a group of youth interviewed in Dharga Town said, "I hate the political leaders, especially the Muslim leaders, they want just our votes; they want to do politics. So, they don't want to bring the issue to an end." Interview No: 6 said, "Sinhalese are good people. Only a few people are involve in this kind of violent activity. These people are used by the politician to get votes from the Sinhalese and this also could be to get the votes from the Muslim community. Politicians are opportunistic. They use these kinds of ethnic riots to win the election, and they get lots of political benefits. We like nonviolence, we hate violence, and we do not want to violently attack any other community. Islam is a religion of peace. It encourages only nonviolence. We are Sri Lankans, Sinhalese are our neighbors and friends."

A reverend from Puttalam (Interview 14) laid the blame for the violence at the feet of the Sinhala extremists and called for peace and nonviolence: I really do not like the acts of the BBS leader. He is not a Buddhist, the Buddha never taught violence and hating other religions or people. Buddhism is also a religion of peace like Islam. The world believes that the Lord Buddha is a person of nonviolence. This is a country of all people living here. Humanity is what matters, not the different identities. I like *Sufism*, it is nonviolent. I heard that the *Wahhabi*

people are violent like the BBS. Extremists never win. Mahatma Gandhi won because of his nonviolent strategy. It is a powerful weapon (Interview 14).

In their nonviolent action, Sri Lankan Muslims have periodically taken political action. Recently, "Twenty-one MPs representing different parties have come together under the Muslim Parliamentarians forum to demand justice for the Blasphemy of their God Almighty Allah by Buddhist monk Galagoda Atte Gnanasara", as reported in the Colombo Telegraph, in an article titled "Muslim Parliamentarians Forum Wants Action Against Gnanasara For Blaspheming Allah" posted on December 13, 2016 (Colombo Telegraph, 2016d). The same article draws attention to a previous attempt by 18 MPs who forwarded a petition to then-president Mahinda Rajapaksa. Both attempts show that Muslim parliamentarians, even though they may be silent in certain situations, do attempt to use nonviolent methods to convince the government to act justly in communal matters. This also relates to the practice of pragmatic nonviolence, which focuses on converting or disintegrating a government. The latter did take place in Sri Lanka, with the toppling of the government in 2015, one that the Muslims supported through political action.

4.3.12 Violence, Conflict, and the Muslim

Violence and conflict are not the same: "Stathis N. Kalyvas critiques the tendency to treat violence as a synonym for conflict, such terms like "ethnic conflict", "ethnic violence", or "ethnic war" take on the same meaning. Conflict need not be violent; violence need not reach the level of war. And the causes of violence may differ from the causes of other forms of conflict" (Chenoweth and Lawrence, 2010:145). Thus, it is apparent that conflict does not have to lead to or end in violence. It is not a "stage" in it but a form of conflict. This is what we see with the Muslims, who use nonviolence to arrive at suitable compromises.

However, violence is an abrupt rupture of the existing political process. Charles Tilly (1978:177) says, the state is often the initiator of violence. In this base, it could be reasonable enough to assume that any ethnic group who do have certain legitimate frustrations that can erupt any time if not addressed in a proper manner. The government seems not to have learnt lessons from the past, with the LTTE. This is felt by the Muslims, especially the youth, who create unrest among the other youth and the community. This is true of Muslims around the country.

Tilly (1978:177) postulates that the authoritarian tool (is) capable of silencing opposition but says that repression (has) also been said to spur opposition. This is applicable in the Sri Lankan context, because the government has silenced the minority with the authoritarian tool, but it remains to be seen how long this situation will last. The older generation of the Muslim community have managed so far to keep the young in check, but as evidenced in Aluthgama, the young are no longer content to be placid. The interviews also showed this, as the group interviewed had hardliners and non-religious youth, who might not be as malleable to the older generation and the priests as the government would like to think. In addition, "An unresolved conflict is likely to generate anger and frustration, which may spark violence" (Chenoweth and Lawrence, 2010:150). It can be argued that this is the likely case in the youth of the Muslim community.

While the older generation takes decisions based on a Rational Action Model (Chenoweth and Lawrence, 2010: 174), that allow them to "take strategic decisions about how to challenge the state" (174), the more hot-headed youth may not be willing to employ this same tactic. This can lead to their anger being channeled to violence. This is especially true in cases where it is not clear what the reply action of the government will be: "The less clear the policy directing a repressive response is and the less oversight of the execution of the policy there is, the more room for discretion there will be among the security forces physically responding" (Chenoweth and Lawrence, 2010:178). This situation is exacerbated by the divisions within the Muslim ranks: Some follow the *Sufi* tradition and insist on nonviolence and acceptance. They change with the times, work with the majority and are peaceful. The others are increasingly violent, basing their lives on literal readings of the religious texts and tenets.

Three businessmen interviewed as interview no. 21 summarized this: We have to stop the importing of Middle Eastern culture in our country. Our women and men dressed well using our national dresses. We do not need Sharia banks in our country. We can follow the Sharia law even in the bank system that we have in our country. Some newly emerged *Ulama*s are businessmen, and they brainwashed our Muslim people. We have our personal law; there is no ban on conducting our prayers or other religious activities in this country; we cannot blame all the Sinhalese people due to the acts of a few Sinhalese people (Interview 21).

As seen in the previous chapter, the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act needs to change and reform, but the extremist factions do not allow this because of their dependence on the literal or historical meanings and contexts. Izeth Hussain (2016b), writing to the Colombo Telegraph

contradicts this practice, saying that it is dangerous to place so much trust in an outdated system that is hearsay: A point to be noted and emphasized is that the hadiths came to be questioned not only after the four schools of law – those of *Abu Hanifa, Shafi, Malik*, and *ibn Hanbal* – were adopted as integral parts of orthodox Islam. They were questioned by one of the four legists whose systems were given canonical status. *Abu Hanifa*, whose school of law is the most widely prevalent in the Islamic world, did not use the hadiths at all as one of the bases of his system, because he regarded only 17 of them as authentic – according to Morteza Mutahhari in his book Jurisprudence and its Principles. That means that Islamic law can be formulated without any recourse to the hadiths. The corollary of that would be that any law can be regarded as Islamic provided that it is consonant with the spirit of Islam as enunciated in the Koran.

This is most interesting to note given the confidence that the ACJU and the *Thoheed Jamath* have on the Hadiths. Basing one's system of belief on hearsay (which is how the Hadiths have been written according to many) is a foolhardy idea. In the 2nd part of his 3-part series (Husain, 2016a), he quotes Montgomery Watt who said, "The idea underlying the doctrine is that certain commands to the Muslims were only of temporary application, and that when circumstances changed they were abrogated or replaced by others". He goes on to expound on this idea: as it was shown above there were three different Koranic positions on the drinking of wine within a single lifetime, that of the Prophet. How on earth are we to suppose that the provisions of the Sharia, formulated by four Islamic legists two centuries and more after the death of the Prophet, are sacrosanct and immutable for all time? The commonsense of the matter is that if God had wanted to prescribe a comprehensive legal code valid for all time, He would have done so in the Koran. He did not, and I find myself forced to accept the liberal critique that the Sharia is a human construct and not something divinely ordained. The Divine Law is rigid. This is relevant to what we face today with the ACJU. They too need to move with the times, and help reform the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act. However, their focus is on extremist methods of reacting to the country.

CHAPTER FIVE

Data Analysis and Results II:
Effectiveness of Muslims' Nonviolent Means to Manage Riots

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the second research question: (i) how did the ethnic Muslims respond to the conflicts and riots resulting from the tension between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Muslims and (ii) How effective were the Muslims' chosen nonviolent means to manage the riots. Accordingly this chapter presents results of analysis and investigates how Muslims legitimize their nonviolent reaction although they were violently attacked and presents findings of the analyses about the decision-making processes that resulted in this strategy and examines how the decision to use nonviolence is taken by the Muslim leaders when violence is directed against them.

5.1   Response of Muslims to Violence and Riots

5.1.1   Perceptions of Sinhalese on Muslims

Many issues arise when a Muslim person lives in a non-Muslim country such as Sri Lanka. There are religious and communal as well as social and economic differences. In interview 7, the youth highlighted some of these issues: "Language is a major problem since Sinhalese rarely speak Tamil. They do not know about the Muslims, and this creates lots of misunderstanding about Muslims. They do not know what is going on in the mosques, but they criticize that mosque imams preach extremism." They also said that, "Muslims are an isolated community and they do not have very close relationships with the Sinhalese people," and that "Some think Muslims are good. But they also think they are outsiders, not Sri Lankans."

Showing their understanding of the situation in the country, they also said that, "Ethnic riots are the production of politics, opportunist politicians and the existing political environment created ethnic or communal riots. Some people think that the existence and the survival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is possible only with creation of the feeling of racism, which means Sinhaleness." This leads the community to sometimes support other countries over Sri Lanka, especially in sports, and also not to "give respect to the National Anthem and national values" (Interview 7). The result of this distance could someday be violence against the majority.

However, the group spoke strongly in favor of nonviolence, highlighting that the "All Ceylon *Jammiyyathul Ulama* contributed a lot for the nonviolent response to the recent violence against Muslims." They also said that Muslims and Sri Lanka have a special relationship: …Muslims are treated much better in Sri Lanka than in other countries. We have equal rights. During the independence struggle with the British, T. B. Jayah told the British that they will discuss their problems and will sort out but they are together in getting independence. Muslims did not want to have any kind separation in the country like what happened in India. The Muslims conquered even India, but they did not want to conquer Sri Lanka at all because Sinhalese kings treated the Muslims with a peaceful manner (Group interview, interview 7).

5.1.2   Response from the Other Communities

In some interviews with Sinhalese Buddhist people, the position of the Muslims became somewhat murky: In interview 17, some of the Buddhists were ambiguous in their response: All extremism must be defeated. Each community must respect other communities. We like tolerance, harmony. Muslims are good except for the extremists. I do not understand Muslim women covering their face. It is strange. It has recently emerged. I do not understand halal for water bottles. Establishing Sharia banks in Sri Lanka, I think all these things are extremism. BBS and other extreme organizations are partly working to protect Buddhism and the Sri Lankan Buddhist culture without any further destruction. If they are involved in violence, it cannot be accepted because Lord Buddha did not teach violence (Interview 17).

This particular comment shows that some Buddhists are suspicious on the matter of Muslim extremism, and that they see the BBS as being a protector. Some Sinhalese Christian people were of the opinion that the "BBS leader is not a Sinhalese Buddhist, he is a terrorist, and they get political support from Gotabaya. He has become the unofficial police. They destroyed the churches and the Muslim mosques. They are a political organization not a Buddhist organization. They sell Buddhism" (Interview 18). Thus, they call for peace: "(BBS) likes violence, but Buddhism is purely nonviolent. The BBS leader wants to come to power, that's his target. Their target is not only Muslims but all the minorities, they want to live here only the Sinhala Buddhists. We love peace in the country."

Response from the Tamils was what was done by the LTTE was wrong (Interview 19) and that the Muslims are good people. Two Tamil people (Interview 19) said, "We have the same culture, same language. We are divided by the Sinhalese state. Our solidarity is a great loss for

them. We do not justify everything that the LTTE did as right. They should not fight with the Muslims. The Muslims contributed a lot for the liberation of Eelam. Some political struggles kept us as enemies." In interview 20, the respondents said, "I think, like Tamils Muslims also have to respond to them violently. The Sinhalese have politically divided the Tamils and the Muslims in order to keep each minority under them." These respondents seem to believe that the Muslims and the Tamils are of similar backgrounds and these two communities must be united. Otherwise, the Sinhala political leaders are benefited out of division. However, according to the dispersion of the Muslims in the country, they cannot survive without supporting the political interests of the Sinhalese as the 2/3 of the Muslims living in the areas where the Sinhalese are majority.

5.1.3   Muslims Chosen Nonviolence

Thus, irrespective of the opinions of the other communities, Muslims choose to manage riots with nonviolence because of the issues mentioned in the previous chapter. Having been repressed by movements that are supported by the government (Farook, 2014), they are mistrustful of the police. They do not feel safe, and do not wish to be at their mercy. Their businesses and economy have been affected due to their minority status and the majority instantly trying to undermine them. In addition, their safety and their families' safety cannot be guaranteed. Thus, Muslims' relationship with violence is complicated. They do not wish to take up arms, keeping to the teachings of their religion that calls for the sacredness of life (Jahanbegloo, 2014, 47).

This was echoed in the interviews too: One interviewee, belonging to *Tableek Jamath*, said, "We are Muslims, we cannot live as animals, we must live with peace and harmony with other people. Islam asks us to love other people" (Interview 6). A group interview conducted for the research with youth in the *Jamath e Islami* organization (Interview 7) drew similar answers: "Islam is a religion of peace and it works in favor of nonviolent response." Extending this same idea but adding another dimension, an International Political Analyst and Lobbyist (Interview 2), said, "We have a religion and it has taught us how to be patient. So, in a riot situation, nonviolent response is the best option to defeat racism in the country." They know that their violence cannot combat violence and understand it to be futile. Thus, they have made a choice to engage with nonviolence through political, social and economic action. Their nonviolence is mainly a political action. They take to negotiations and discussion, peaceful dissent, etc., to show the government and the majority that they do not agree with the discrimination and

violence. Through pragmatic nonviolence proposed by Sharp (quoted in Jahanbegloo, 2014) they attempt to convert the majority to their cause.

Sufism, which guides the Muslims in Sri Lanka, has always emphasized nonviolent approaches to conflict. The group in interview 7 said, "*Sufi* thoughts influenced a lot in keeping the Muslims nonviolent." *Sufism* calls for a Muslim to wage war only against his own ego. His conflicts must be against his own baser self, not against others. This is the *Jihad* that is preached. It is not the *Jihad* of popular current discourse, which calls on Muslims to wage war against those who do not believe in the Muslim religion and way. *Jihad* is of two types, greater *Jihad* and lesser *Jihad*. Jahanbegloo says that Greater *Jihad* "does not promote violence or warfare against external enemies, but rather, it calls on an internal effort of struggle waged against one's self" (2014:42). It is in essence, against one's own ego. This is what *Sufism* calls for, unlike in extremist sects that wish to wage war against disbelievers.

The ultimate goal of the Muslim has to be triumphing over his own self. This was in the teachings of the *Sufi* masters in Sri Lanka. However, with the advent of other factions, such as the *Jamath e Islami* and *Thoheed Jamath*, the message was diluted and the nonviolent community became somewhat more violent. This is especially true in the younger generation that has lived with the more violent factions for longer. Where their parents place faith in the mosque and *Ulamas*, these youth (some belonging to the more extremist factions) are willing to take up arms to protect themselves and their community if needed, as evidenced in a few interviews: A leader of *Thowheed Jamath* said: Muslims are not strangers or foreigners, this is our country. We must live here equal to other communities. We must have all the rights as other communities have. I don't know why we are attacked violently and I can't understand to what extent we could be nonviolent. In certain situations, we also have to respond violently. Then the people who are involved in violent attacks against Muslims will understand the power of the Muslims. I think if we attack them back, they will never come and attack us. Otherwise, we will be beaten by them often. We like being nonviolent but the question is for how long. (A leader of *Thowheed Jamath*, Interview 3)

Another interview with a member of *Thowheed Jamath* (Interview 4) emphasized the same opinion about violence: "BBS and other groups always torture Muslims. It must be stopped, (and) it is possible only through violently attacking them. We may face a great loss but it will be the end of violence against Muslims in this country. Extreme Sinhalese did not stop violence against us even after a century. Because they know that we are not going to attack them again."

He justified violence quoting Allah and referencing historical wars: "In Islam, Allah did tell us to be passive. But sometimes violence is important. Violence leads to peace in certain situations. Badr war brought peace. War against LTTE brought peace in Sri Lanka."

Ranaweerage, quoted in Farook (2014, 78) says;

> "When Muslims are continually attacked, it may push the Muslim youths to take up arms for the protection of its community," and it is easy to see that what is happening in the minds of the Muslim youth now, as seen in the words above, and it is also possible to see the similarities this situation had in 1983. Not only did the constant tension between the community's ends in a protracted war, the silence of the presidents (Jayawardena in 1983 and Rajapaksa in 2014) sent a loud message to the minority that they are not important and that their suffering is of no consequence to the government. And much like the 1983 fiasco, the 2014 violence too could have escalated if not for the nonviolence of the Muslim community. The leaders of the Muslim community too attempt to speak up for their people, although some people – including the columnist with the nom de plume of 'punchi putha' – are of the opinion that some politicians such as Rauf Hakeem and Rishard Badhiudeen are self-serving politicians who will not make a personal sacrifice for the betterment of their people (Farook, 2014:71).

Conversely, it must also be understood that the community is hedged in by fears that responding with violence will be detrimental to the entire country as when they respond, the violence can spread to the rest of the country. This will endanger their own community members as well as members of other communities. An eye witness of the Dharga Town riot, said that "the attacks were planned, that it was orchestrated by the BBS and Got*abhaya* Rajapakshe but that the Muslim community ensured that the violence would not spread to other areas: However, our Muslim people managed to control the violence and limited it to Aluthgama without allowing it to spread to any other area where the Muslims live within the Sinhalese community. In the mosque, people gathered and decided to be nonviolent for two reasons: 1. to protect fellow Muslims all over the island, especially in the South, 2. this is not done by the good Sinhalese people, this is a riot organized by the defense secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksha, and the people involved are from the military. Therefore, nonviolence is the only mechanism that could defeat the ethno-racist Sinhala nationalism" (Interviewee 8).

As the group members in interview 7 pointed out, "All people have their self-respect. So, everyone is bound to protect the respect of the community they belong to. One Muslim person's violent attack on a Sinhalese as a response to violence could lead to a spreading of the violent attack all over the island against the Muslims. Nonviolence is the tool of protection for Muslims." In addition, the belief that life's sanctity is provided by God is their compass (Jahanbegloo, 2014, 47), so that they do not wish to endanger anyone's life.

In addition, there seems to be another factor affecting their decision: Their status in the country appears to be unclear to some, according to an International Political Analyst who says: "Muslims think that they do not belong to this country: they feel that they are kind of foreigners. So, it is not possible for them to violently attack the Sinhalese." To him, this is one of the reasons that the Muslims do not attack the majority community. Conversely, another interviewee (Interview 4) said that the Sinhalese think of the Muslims as foreigners: "For them we are foreigners and kind of low class people but we are not. We belong to this country." The two opposing statements highlight the fact that for the Muslims, their place in the country is also a question, and that their position could be precarious. Both the majority and the Muslim community grapple with the question of whether the Muslims belong in the country or not.

Due to the ambiguity of their position in the country and their own belief about the sanctity of life whether Sinhalese or Muslim, the Muslims have so far been slow to respond in a violent manner, but have focused all their attention on political and nonviolent responses. Their responses are not always dependent on others. They have their representatives in the government and they are tasked with agitating on behalf of the community. In addition, with the economic contribution they make with their businesses, they already have some clout, which was exploited in the Halal certificate scenario. They understand their own buying power and know that they are an important minority.

In turn, their economic prowess is understood by the majority and they attack the economy of the Muslims. An article in the Sunday Times, quoted in Farook (2014, 75) says that Buddhist teachings have now turned into a "new cult of civic pedagogy that is saffron in color, fascist in content, economic in purpose". The organized elements attacking the Muslims know that if the economy is affected, the Muslims will be affected. This is why their shops are looted and burnt. Farook has drawn from many articles that detail the looting of the Muslim properties (both commercial and private) during the Aluthgama riot and the following is an excerpt of an eye witness report (Farook, 2014, 84): Around 60 homes have been completely looted and

destroyed, several factories have gone up in flames, two masjids damaged and fired at, nine killed so far, several hundreds of push bikes and motorcycles burnt, around 150 Muslim shops damaged and destroyed.

Referring to the Aluthgama riot, Farook further detailed the Parliamentarian Thewarapperuma's statement, which is borne by Hakeem's statement that the report by the Medical Officer was fraudulent (2014:247). In the first statement, Thewarapperuma lays the blame at the government's feet and says that the attack was premeditated and planned, which then bears out the claim that only Muslim places were looted or damaged. If it was planned earlier, it is possible to know which shops belonged to the Muslims (Farook, 2014:247),

5.1.4   Thought Process behind the Decision to Choose Nonviolence

As Sharp says, pragmatic violence is practical (Jahanbegloo, 2014). It agitates from within. The thought process behind the Muslim decision is based on this understanding. The Muslims have taken a course of action that has the possibility of becoming effective. They focus on political action including voting power to arrive at a balance. Demographics and geographic reasons as well as power relations between the minority and the majority play an important role in their decision to use nonviolent responses. State-sponsored violence is difficult to combat, and violence is an ineffectual answer to state's violence. Thus, the Muslims have taken the most pragmatic solution available to them.

Also, the teachings of people such as Said Nursi, Abdul Gaffar Khan, and Abdul Kalam Azad matter in why they take such a decision. These scholars and thinkers have found that compassion and love will achieve what violence cannot. They have called on Muslims to tread the path of nonviolence, and this has become entrenched in the way Muslims think. Muslims place their faith in Allah and the religious leaders whose teachings are of love and compassion. The Mosque, under the *Sufi* tradition especially, taught Muslims to live in peace with their neighbor and majority community. The Muslims follow such advice from the religious leaders and thus, they have remained nonviolent in the last century of attacks. A Senior Academic (Interview 5) draws attention to this phenomenon:

> "We have learned to obey the elders, our religious leaders, our teachers, our parents and other kinds of leaders. We are a community under the control of all these leaders. We are ready to obey those leaders when it is necessary. In the mosque we obey the Imam, at home our parents, in a riot like in Aluthgama we obey the political leaders and

Muslim organizations like ACJU. Therefore, it is easy for us to make a decision in a situation like ethnic riots. Nonviolence is the only pathway for us to win against all the violence against us. We want a win-win situation. We do not want to defeat the enemy. We must make them know that what they are doing is bad and make them aware that we all are human, and religion or other things are just our identity. One day they will realize this. Our people must be very patient. They cannot go to violence like other extreme groups do. We cannot be extreme at all. It is not our way. It is not the way we were taught by or predecessors or preachers or Islam" (Interview 5).

The comments in interview 7 with the youth show that this sentiment is shared by others. They said that, "Muslims have a passive behavior when it comes to religious leaders. It is an order of Allah for the kids to obey for their parents, students for their teachers, wife for her husband, and public for the Imams. Muslims are organized in a command-obedience manner. Therefore, the Muslims have traditionally obeyed their *Sufi* Masters and it still continues."

They also went on to explain why Muslims choose nonviolence: "Muslims believe the word of Allah. Allah always tells that Allah is with the people who are patient, so the patience is the best tool for winning. Our continuous nonviolent response always led us to win against all the violence against us. Nonviolence is the basic concept in Islam. The nationally established Islamic organizations, like *Shura Council* in Sri Lanka, forced the Muslims to be patient and always be nonviolent. Muslims like peace in the country (Interview 7).

Thus, the Muslim community has taken decisions according to the advice of those who know better. The 'better known' people were the religious leaders. Neither politicians nor other political activists or community leaders. In the earlier period, any decision that is related to the community matters was taken by the village elites, in consultation with other village elders, political activists and businessmen. Now, the trend has changed. Further, the negotiations were held in homes of the village elites and the community leaders or political activists, but now they meet in the Mosque. Earlier the background of the issue was political, and therefore, all decisions were based on political principles and communities' cultural norms and values. Now, it is more religion-based. An eyewitness of the Dharga Town riots says:

"This time I saw a difference. Earlier, in a situation like this, people would gather in the school, other public places, or mostly at the houses of the wealthy people or the houses of the politicians. But this time, all meetings were held at the mosques and all

the meetings were headed by the All Ceylon *Jammiyyathul Ulama*. People were also willing to work under their leadership. There were religious leaders, intellectuals, politicians, and all kinds of leaders in the meetings. They discussed how to respond to this violent attack against the Muslims. Except a small minority, all others agreed to be nonviolent. They said, 'Allah will punish the people involved in this riot'." Responding to the people who wanted to go for a violent response, the leaders said that 'if we attack the Sinhalese around us, the riots will spread all over the island and many tiny Muslim villages will be affected. Therefore, better to be nonviolent'. Further they said that this is a violence backed by the State, therefore the police and all the other military and defense officials will be in favour of the Sinhalese. Some said, 'there are no decent, good Sinhalese involved in these riots, only some third-class people who do not have a house to stay in and who are born in the streets and the people who do not have any decency. So, there is no point fighting with Sinhalese people'. In this kind of situation, nonviolent is the best option (Interview 10).

This allows for the discussion to be inspired by religion as well as common sense and morals. This in turn has both positive and negative connotations. If the mosque is nonviolent, the message too will be nonviolent. If the mosque is extremist, then the discussion will be centered on extremist and violent ideologies. So far, the *Sufi* tradition mosques have taken precedence and thus the nonviolent approach has triumphed. However, it is not clear how long this situation will last. With the majority pushing the community, this may soon change, which is an outcome all Sri Lankans must be awake to.

5.2   Muslim Leaders' Thought Process

5.2.1 Background to Muslim Leaders' Thought Process

The ethnic and racial tensions in the Muslim community impacted physically and psychologically. They have had to grapple with violence coming to their doorstep and taking away their businesses and their family members: They have faced harm from the LTTE during the war, where Muslims have been killed as a direct result of war and as part of targeted action.

As a Senior Academic (in interview-1) said, "Muslims were killed inside mosques." He goes on to say that, "if the Muslims want to respond violently they must have responded to the Tamils not the Sinhalese. They never come and kill the people in the Mosques." These words speak of the festering anger at the LTTE for their actions. The war took a toll on the Muslims,

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and in interview-15, a former LTTE commander, alludes to the cost of the war: "I was in Jaffna when the LTTE killed Muslim people in the Mosques. If I was in the East, I would never have allowed this. It happened under the direct guidance of Prabhakaran. Violence always fails, I told this to Prabhakaran many times."

In such a context of violence affecting their every move, they would look towards leaders to guide them through the difficult times. These leaders are usually religious leaders but political leaders have a role to play in that they are the voice of the minority. They hold the key to dignity and freedom for the community. In this role, the leaders are liable to their constituents and have to walk a tightrope balancing the government and the people. In doing so, they may sometimes face failures, and more often than not, they face issues that the general public does not know about.

5.2.2 Muslim Politicians and Their Limitations

One of the main issues that Muslim politicians face is that the people need them to be in a separate party to represent their community. If they join a main party line, as many popular politicians are, they must toe the party line because ministers are bound by a code. In doing so, they may not always be able to condemn the government (or even their own party if in the opposition). If they do not have this right, they cannot represent their community members properly. This dichotomy is difficult but needs to be navigated.

In addition, all politicians face another problem: They must garner enough support to be reelected. Thus, if they do not satisfy their constituents' needs, they run the risk of losing in the next election. Given this possibility, it is normal to expect politicians to support their voters. However, in Sri Lanka, given the corruption, bribery and general lawlessness, politicians are less concerned with the needs of their community than with their own needs. Many politicians come to politics promising everything to the people but soon focus solely on making money for themselves. If not, they undertake charity programs that are close to the election time so that they get their name and face on social and print media as the ideal politician. This is a time-tested strategy that is still in use. This is true in some cases for the Muslim population too.

As mentioned previously, Hakeem and Bathiudeen, popular ministers, have been criticized by journalists and people alike for being self-serving and selfish. They are thought to be toeing the party line in fear they will lose out on ministerial perks. They are not trusted to make the situation better. However, there are other members of the community such as Imtiyaz Bakeer

Marker and Kabir Hashim that manage to hold on to the respect they have been given. They do not focus on making money, but attempt to support their constituents. The inaction of certain politicians has led to some dissatisfaction in the community. An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot (Interview 10) explained why the political leadership is now weak, and linked it to why the religious leadership is coming to the fore.

After the establishment of a separate Muslim political party, Muslim political leadership did not become stronger. Also, it was not capable enough to rule Muslims in the country. Further, the fragmentation even in the Muslim political parties led *Jammiyyathul Ulama* to take the leadership of the Muslim Community both politically and spiritually. Now the Muslim community listens to the JU rather than to the political leaders. They are fed up with the political leadership. Every decision of the community is now made following the guidance of the ACJU. All the Islamic sects come together in this situation (of the riots) and agree with the leadership of the ACJU. According to him, the religious leadership is now responsible for the decisions of the community, and the politicians have lost their stronghold and relevance. This was a result of perceived inaction on the part of the Muslim politicians. If the politicians were seen to be carrying out their responsibilities, this division would not have occurred and there seems to be a loss of support to politicians.

5.2.3 Politicians and Available Political Action

At this point, it is important to know what methods of nonviolent political action is open to Muslim politicians in their fight for their constituents' rights. According to Sharp, quoted in Jahanbegloo (2014, 99-103), they can engage in any of the following: symbolic demonstrations such as parades and marches to demonstrate the Muslim community's disagreement; protests and persuasion; economic, social, and political noncooperation through non-attendance at work, strikes, economic and social boycotts of events, activities, or persons, and refusal to obey unjust laws; noncooperation with the government; and political intervention. There are thus many forms available for Muslim leaders should they wish to protest injustice and discrimination. It should be understood that nonviolence is not perfect. It can be slow, results may not always be visible, and it might easily be ineffectual. However, an action that does not result in bloodshed is a better alternative to one that does.

An Islamic religious teacher and preacher, explains, "Nonviolence should never be confused with inaction or passivity. Nonviolence is action in the full sense of the word. It is more forceful

than that of violence. It is a fact that nonviolent activism is more powerful and effective than violent activism" (Interview 13).

He further goes on to explain that: "Nonviolent activism is not limited in its sphere. It is a course of action which may be followed in all matters. Whenever individuals, groups or communities are faced with a problem, one way to solve it is by resorting to violence. The better way is to attempt to solve the problem by peaceful means, avoiding violence and confrontation. Peaceful means may take various forms. In fact, it is the nature of the problem that will determine which of these peaceful methods is applicable to the given situation" (Interview 13).

Given the points in favor of nonviolence, it could be safely assumed that politicians would be involved in the process. However, it is not clear how much of a political backing there has been for any such action mentioned above. Here, a distinction is made between participation of ministers in marches and protests organized by the public, and actual organization of such civil disobedience and nonviolent political action. The *Thoheed Jamath* and other organizations have staged protests against the Muslim Personal Law reforms, Muslim rights organizations have closed shops in protest of the communal riots, and civilians and affiliated organizations have marched against films that they deem are derogatory. However, there seems to be no political input. The politicians do not get involved in this. Their only contribution is arguably speaking out in the parliament on certain (and generally rare) instances, and at election time. This is possibly due to their own personal agendas that do not allow them to criticize the government, of which they are a part. These are part of the issues they must navigate but they impact the ability of the politician to carry out his responsibilities. In a service-oriented post, a politician cannot afford to be self-centered and yet, Sri Lankan politicians have shown themselves to be self-centered. However, there is one factor in their defense, which is that the previous government brooked no opposition. It became a matter of personal safety if you worked with the government, and many decided to put personal safety above civic duty. This was also why politicians were cowed if they were told to keep quiet by the president (Farook, 2014:30-31).

5.2.4   Balancing Act: Managing the Muslims and the Government

For Muslim politicians, another issue has arisen. Given the recent violence, they must now ensure that those who were affected are compensated and their trauma subsided. They must

call for justice for the victims through punishment for the perpetrators. Without such a commitment to their community, Muslims will not be willing to accept any politician as their representative. This is also true for those who suffered due to the war, including the internally displaced persons. Their needs must be met soon and effectively. To do so, the representative must engage with the successive governments to ensure beneficial outcomes. They must continue to maintain good relations with either party that comes to power because their needs transcend party politics. There must be a balancing game that does not concede any of the community's rights without antagonizing the incumbent regime. This is essential because the majority can only be converted if they are not prejudiced against the Muslim community.

This is doubly hard in the current political context given that the majority population fears the demands of the Eastern Muslims. The Eastern Muslims have specific and more complex needs because of the war and their multiple displacements. There appears to be a rift building between the communities, based on rational or irrational fears. This needs to be fixed before it turns into a chasm. In doing so, the representatives need to bear in mind that the different generations of Muslims in politics have different experiences and viewpoints. Thus, the newer politicians and the youth will desire different outcomes to any problem from those desired by the older politicians and the older generation. The youth may take somewhat more hardliner stances and not support peaceful settlements in the same way that the older generations did. This is one contributing factor to the fear of the majority and it falls within the purview of the Muslim politicians to fix this rift. In doing so, it is essential to be consultative (with the youth and with clerics) and firm so that everyone is on the same page.

5.2.5 Actors: The Violent and the Nonviolent

As part of the research question under review, it is important to see who is in favor of violence and who is not. It has been shown in multiple locations that the BBS is violence-centric. They created the issues that others must now unravel. However, the Muslim youth are also showing a propensity towards violence. They are no longer completely under the mosque and it's more lenient and forgiving teachings. There is a section of youth who are part of the hardliners and they are not afraid of a violent struggle. This was reflected in the interviews conducted where they said they knew hardliners and some interviewed youths were in fact hardliners.

There seems to be a divide: on one side, the older generation of the Muslims prefer to engage in political action that is nonviolent. On the other hand, the youth are about to take up arms.

They have moved away from pragmatic nonviolence and might be moving to violence. It must be remembered that violence is present in nonviolence too: it carries the ability to topple governments if done properly and it jars societies and governments into action. However, given the limitations of nonviolent action (detailed above), some may feel that violence is the answer, ignoring the fact that nonviolence is also practical.

This is helped by the fragmentation of the political leadership, which they see as unable to help them. Also, the political leadership is constantly challenged by new persons entering the political arena so that politicians are sometimes distracted. As always, the final straw that breaks the back of the proletariat is the self-centered behavior of the politicians that call for individual action by the society. If certain government ministers cannot contradict the government or condemn the majority, their ability to serve their community is affected and in turn, nonviolent action of the entire group is affected because it loses potency. In addition, in earlier times, the political leaders banded together as Muslims to talk to the Sinhalese and solve matters. Now, there are many small parties and all are involved in individual and party capacities. This creates confusion in some instances.

CHAPTER SIX

Findings and Conclusion

6.1 Key Findings

There have been multiple reasons for attacks on ethnic Muslims. These include their own increasing extremism fueled by the spread of *Wahhabism* and other various sects. These sects have promoted more extremist ideas, countering the impact of the *Sufi* teachings. *Sufi* beliefs and priests are floundering amid the chaos created by the others, including the Middle Eastern imported dress code such as wearing *burqa* (face covering) and *hijabs* for their women, issuing halal certificates and the increasing number of mosques. This new invasions is divided the Muslim community as well as deviated them from the Sinhala community.

Added to this, the economic success of the minority community has led to a feeling of animosity in the majority community, thus resulting in violence. This is always the first recourse as the majority community understands that the way to cripple a community is to attack its economy. In this way, the Muslim community has faced hurdles in living in the country.

The situation at the moment is volatile for a community that has come out of a long war and the inconsistencies in the government and political system can result in a violent Muslim youth that do not listen to the words of the religious leaders or elders of the community. This cannot then be combatted through violence or crackdowns. What is needed is a nonviolent response, as has been employed by the Muslim community for generations. However, to do this, the government has to recognize the issues that are before it, the possible responses, and work hard to reach the best solution. To do this, it must become apolitical and care deeply for reconciliation and harmony.

Muslims are in search of security and political power to ensure security of their community. However, as a minority community they are unable to achieve this. The Muslim community has faced horrors both during and after the war because of their minority status, and now with communal riots, the situation is no better. However, the government change that they helped effect has had a settling effect as the situation has somewhat cooled. This is helped by the fact that the BBS is no longer as effective as previously. A serious catastrophe may have been averted with the change of the government that will help the community move on to more

normal times. This will help grow their economic opportunities and revert to a safe environment.

When issues faced by politicians in terms of communal violence and the war are examined it has been found that they have a unique set of issues that stem from the inability to contradict the government, personal agendas, increasing extremism in the society and youth, etc. This issue has a major relevance to the context because nonviolent political action needs some political support if not leadership (which is not essential).

Muslims in terms of the communal riots that took place in 2014 have responded in nonviolent manners, such as with peaceful protests and political discussions. The religious leaders and political leaders have attempted to help their community through speaking out on behalf of them and have kept them in check when attacked. This is mainly due to the political acumen of the Muslims, the religious background, and the *Sufi* focus on nonviolence. *Sufis* always obey religious leaders (which is mentioned in the *Quran*) and they have a student-teacher (obey for orders) relationship so that it is and it stays a controlled society. Nonviolence comes from this relationship, where the religious leaders have control of their flock (this was true both in 1915 and 2014).

Muslims have remained nonviolent, using political action to gain ground and be heard. The mosques have so far kept the violence in check, and have opted for peaceful negotiations and discussions. However, this situation is now in some danger because of the advent of extremist *Wahhabi*sts and their influence with the youth.

In implementing nonviolence, if the Muslim Cultural Ministry is involved, it immediately becomes political. If done at the provincial level or even individual level, it is local level and becomes manageable. This allows the mosque to be involved, which could of course in turn lead to incorporating doctrine, involving the *Quran*, and preaching from a religious background rather than a political one. While this would be ideal if *Sufi* and nonviolent methods and teachings are followed, this too becomes problematic if *Wahhabi* teachings are followed and extremism is encouraged. According to the *Sufis*, that is not a true interpretation of the *Quranic* verses, even though the *Wahhabis* interpret that way and call people to violent actions. They draw strength from the networks with the *Wahhabi* movements which function in the Middle Eastern countries to propagate.

One factor that keeps the situation peaceful is that the Muslim community understands the need to be peaceful. Whether it is to safeguard their brethren or to live within the teachings of Allah, they do not wish to respond with violence when attacked. However, there is a limit that they can be pushed

6.2   Conclusion

It is apparent that the Muslim community has chosen to respond nonviolently to the violent attacks made against them by the radical Sinhala ethnocratics. This is due to their own practicing *Sufi* religious background, which emphasizes compassion and love, and their minority status. As a minority, they do not have the same clout that the majority does and this plays a role in their decision to employ nonviolence. Also, given their political leadership and religious leadership, the Muslim community is much more prone to choosing a nonviolent approach. However, this is not out of mere passivity but out of a calculated and educated understanding of how politics work in the country and what works best for the community without aggravating conditions.

6.3   Policy Recommendations

It is imperative that the law is strengthened: the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act must be reformed, gender-related laws must be made stricter and more actionable, and the general law of the country must be renewed in ways that there are no loopholes for perpetrators to pass through. UN recommendations must be incorporated into the legal system of the country and the government must sign and ratify UN policies.

If peace is to prevail in the country, negotiations and discussions must become the order of the day. The government must ensure that the BBS does not rise again, and that violence will be curbed at the outset. To do this, law and order in the country should be of the highest order and the police must be made both independent and accountable so that they do not take the law into their hands to harm the minority communities. It would also be beneficial to incorporate a ministry (or reappoint one) for reconciliation within the communities, where the minister would be responsible for ensuring these attacks do not happen in the future.

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ANNEXURE

List of In-Depth Interviews

Interview 1 – Senior Academic - Department of Sociology, South Eastern University, Sri Lanka. He was interviewed over the Facebook chat as well as directly (13/11/2015).

Interview 2 – An International Political Analyst and Lobbyist. He was interviewed over the Facebook chat as well as directly. (14/11/2015)

Interview 3 – Two people of *Thoheed Jamath*. (15/11/2015)

Interview 4 – Two people of *Thoheed Jamath*. (15/11/2015)

Interview 5 – Professor of Mathematics, University of Moratuwa.

Interview 6 – *Thableek Jamath*. (16/11/2015)

Interview 7 – Members of *Jamath-e-Islami*, These people are very active members. It was a group interview. 27/12/2015.

Interview 8 – An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot. An Islamic Religious Teacher, Dharga Town, 29/12/2015.

Interview 9 – An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot. An English Teacher, Dharga Town. 29/12/2015.

Interview 10 – An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot. A History teacher, Dharga Town. (29/12/2015)

Interview 11 – An eyewitness of Dharga Town Riot. A political activist and an active negotiator between the Muslims and the Sinhalese during the ethnic riot in Dharga Town. (29/12/2015)

Interview 12 – Chief Executive Officer of *Bodu Bala Sena*. An active principal lay spokesman. (3/01/2016)

Interview 13 – An active preacher of *Jamath-e-Islami*. An Islamic religious teacher and a recognized preacher in Puttalam. (4/01/2016)

Interview 14 – A Reverence from Puttalam. (4/01/2016)

Interview 15 – Former LTTE commander, 2nd in command. (06/01/2016)

Interview 16- A brigadier in the Sri Lankan army. 09/01/2016

Interview 17 –Sinhalese Buddhist people. These people were interviewed very informally during my travels and I had a chat in Facebook Messenger and Whats'app. (Businessman, clerks, university students, three wheel drivers, teachers and lawyers)

Interview 18 –Sinhalese Christians people. These people were interviewed very informally during my travel and I had a chat in Facebook Messenger and Whats'app... (Businessman, pensioners, university students, three wheel drivers, active religious converters)

Interview 19 –Tamils in the Eastern Province. Two ordinary people, University lecturer and a Businessmen. (19/01/2016)

Interview 20 –Tamils in the Northern Province. Two Journalists, two ordinary people (20/01/2016).

Interview 21 –Muslims in the Northern Province. Three Businessmen. (20/01/2016).

Interview 22 –Muslim Businessmen from Colombo, Beruwala, Aluthgama, Kalutara and Atulugama.

Interview 23 –A group of youth in Dharga Town, Aluthgama. There were 8 people in the group. These youths were active participants during the riot. Some of them are religiously active and some are not. When I asked about some of these (3) people (religiously non active) from the certain elders in Dharga Town, they said that these youth do not have any kind of recognition from the community and do not have any respect even from their family members. Another elder person said that these three people are always looking forwarded to fighting with others). Among the other five members (religiously active) two are hardliners (representing *Thowheed Jamath*) and the other two are white collars and one is a businessman. 22/01/2016

Interview 24 –Students of *Sufi* orders (Kadiriyathun Nabaviyya(3), Alaviyyathul Qadiriyya(1), Naqshabandiya(1), Shazuliyya (2) and Rifayiyya (1). (22/01/2016)