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Correspondence

Managing Editor, *Al-Itqān*
Research Management Centre, RMC
International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
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Buddhist-Muslim Religious Co-Existence in Sri Lanka: A Historical Analysis

Fatima Afra Mohamed Razak*

Thameem Ushama**

Abstract

Sri Lanka is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural country. The Sinhalese people constitute the majority ethnic group of Sri Lanka, while Hindus, Muslims, and Christians are the minorities. Many historical records have proven that Muslims in Sri Lanka had a long history of peaceful co-existence with other ethnic groups, especially Sinhala-Buddhists. However, after the end of the civil war in 2009, the hostility against Muslims has increased in various forms. Therefore, sustainable religious co-existence has become a challenge in a multi-religious society like Sri Lanka. This study examines both the historical and current views on the Buddhist-Muslim relationship to enlighten the community about both communities' interactions. This study used a qualitative approach alongside the data collected from research articles, dissertations, books, newspaper articles, websites, activity reports, and publications.

Keywords: Sinhala-Buddhists, Multi-religious society, Religious-Coexistence, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Islam is a complete way of life as its guidance is comprehensive and includes the social, economic, political, moral, and spiritual aspects of life. Further, Islam is a religion of peace as its principles and teachings emphasise religious harmony and peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance with other faiths. Nevertheless, when various religious groups or people with different opinions are present, it is common to witness disagreements and conflicts from time to time.

Co-existence generally means living peacefully with others without considering any differences.¹ In another way, co-existence is how people's diverse religions, ethnicities, cultures, belief systems, and perspectives

* A postgraduate student (PhD) at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, IIUM. Email: afraimranuop.7@gmail.com

** Corresponding author and a Professor at the Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM. Email: thameem@iium.edu.my

¹ “Coexistence - Definition of Coexistence by The Free Dictionary,” accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/coexistence>

remain in harmony with mutual tolerance and acceptance.¹ So, a society or nation with different policies or opposite trends lives in mutual peace and understanding without clashes while maintaining individuality.

Likewise, religious co-existence implies the recognition of religious pluralism and respect for all other faiths. It must be understood that, at least in other religions, there are some facts and beliefs. Religious co-existence is then defined as tolerating other people's different religious beliefs, policies, and practices even though they contradict us or are erroneous in our point of view.

Considering that religious co-existence is necessary for any community or country, various historical records demonstrate the amicable connection between Sri Lankan Muslims, Buddhists, and other ethnic groups. History indicates that Muslims in Sri Lanka have deep roots in co-existence with other ethnic groups for decades and have always been honest and loyal to the rulers.² However, despite the maintenance effort of peace and social harmony by the Muslims of Sri Lanka, they were not treated as an equal ethnic group. Various campaigns and attacks had been directed to them to break the harmony, particularly after the victory of the Sri Lanka government against the Liberal Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The extremist Buddhist National groups have become increasingly disturbed by Muslims in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the Easter Sunday attack has affected the relationship of Muslims with other faiths and caused a series of campaigns against the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

Buddhist-Muslim Religious Co-Existence till Colonial Rule

As Lorna Dewaraja mentioned, history is concerned with the arts of war rather than the peace sentiment. Hence, many people are more aware of the records of wars and riots rather than the peaceful co-existence of groups of people. On that account, a handful of people in Sri Lanka are aware of the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims. The Muslims first came to Sri Lanka as foreign traders until they established themselves and became citizens. They had developed a positive and mutual relationship with the residents from the beginning. One of the most crucial pieces of evidence that history recorded is that of an ancient capital city of Sri Lanka,

¹ Toyese Abdurahman Adesokan, "An Appraisal of Peaceful Coexistence between Muslims and Non-Muslims in Houston Texas of USA," *E-Journal of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization* 2 (2015): 48.

² Athambawa Sarjoon, Mohammad Yusoff, and Nordin Hussin, "Anti-Muslim Sentiments and Violence: A Major Threat to Ethnic Reconciliation and Ethnic Harmony in Post-War Sri Lanka," *Religions* 7, no. 10 (2016): 125.

Anuradhapura. King *Pandukapaya* ruled that he had separated some lands for 'Yonas', so Wilhelm Geiger, who translated the *Mahāvamsa*, mentioned that the 'Yonas' means Arab merchants. This incident is one of the greatest proofs of the amity of Sinhala rulers and Arab merchants.

Similarly, the messenger's servant returned to Sri Lanka after meeting Caliph Umar. The monarchs of Sri Lanka welcomed Muslims because they had created a good impression. This occurrence became evident in history, which demonstrates Muslims' influence. According to Wickremasinghe, Muslims arrived in Sri Lanka as merchants instead of invaders or battle veterans. They coexisted peacefully with the Sinhalese. They had no intention of seizing political power or spreading their religion over the country. Even though they constructed the mosques, they never attempted to convert the Sinhalese to Islam.¹ History has ensured that Muslims solely intended to trade in Sri Lanka.

Religious co-existence was noted and stated by twelfth-century Arab author al-Idrīsī in the court of Sri Lanka. Further, Khālid ibn Abu Bakāya's presence in Sri Lanka clarified many things concerning Sinhala Muslim affinity. One of the significant points is that the Sinhala rulers bestowed religious freedom. As Lorna Dewaraja mentioned, if neither Arabs had this freedom, Muslims would have managed to stay on the Island. Further, she stated that Arabs had the same freedom to worship their god as other religious people. There was no religious distinction being practised against the Muslim minority. Accordingly, the king's advisory council was made up of Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, each with four members. This is an overlooked or forgotten aspect of both communities' religious co-existence in Sri Lanka.²

According to the records of the Arab travellers, Adam's peak was a preferred place of pilgrimage for Muslims. Based on Ibn Battuta, there was a well-known story about the elephants' diet of pilgrims.³ After this incident, Sinhalese intensified the relationship with Arab pilgrims,

¹ S.H.M Faleel, "Co-Existence of Sri Lankan Muslims - Ii," *Islamic Thought* 29, no. 2 (2007): pp. 3–9.

² L. S. Dewaraja, *The Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony, 900-1915* (Lanka Islamic Foundation., 1994): p. 29

³ Sheikh Abu 'Abdullah ibn Khafif came to Sri Lanka with thirty dervishes to visit Adam's peak. Meanwhile Sinhalese was hesitated to talk with these foreigners. While their travelling they saw many baby elephants everywhere. The dervishes wanted to catch them to fulfil their hunger. Despite the shaiikh's objections, they caught an elephant and ate it because they were hungry and tired. But the Shaikh did not involve in that food. That night, as the dervishes were sleeping, the elephant exacted his vengeance by killing them all. The Elephants sniffed the Shaikh and, conscious of his innocence, picked him by his trunk and sat him on its back, carrying him to the region where the inhabitants were.

changing the image of Muslims among them. Since that day, they had treated them as equals and began to respect the Musalmans. They welcomed them into their homes, ate with them, and trusted them to the extent of handing over their wives and children.¹

Adam's peak honouring by several ethnicities so far and the appearance of Sinhala-Buddhist inscription and Arabic Islamic inscription² has been one of best testimonials of religious harmony as said by Lorna Dewaraja in her writing.

Further, Sinhala kings had a generous and cordial relationship with Arab Muslims as they contributed to the country through trade, and they always stood by the side of the rulers. Unfortunately, in the middle of the 10th century, Sri Lanka's political situation was miserable. Following the Chola's invasions in the country, subsequently, the country was subjected to numerous foreign invasions and occupations.³ Importantly, Ariya Chakravarty's invasion on the north side of the country had many complicated situations.

Most notably, at this critical juncture, Sri Lanka's long-established friendly relationship with Muslims was strongest. Muslims in Sri Lanka chose to side with the Sinhalese against the Hindu rulers of Jaffna, as stated by Lorna Dewaraja. It remains the most outstanding example of the harmonious relationship between rulers and Arab Muslims in history. Additionally, it shows that despite the genuine respect and the fondness of Muslims towards the country and the rulers in general, terrible times had revealed the harsh reality of humanity, as demonstrated by Muslims in Sri Lanka in the early years. Lorna Dewaraja mentioned that the number of interconnected political occurrences that had arisen elsewhere by the end of the 13th century strengthened the relations of Sinhalese-Muslims.⁴

Further, Arab Muslims had many significant positions and played essential roles during the early period in the country. One of the prominent models stated by Codrington, Abu Uthman, was sent as an ambassador to Egypt court in 1283 Bhuvanaikabahu I who ruled Yapahuwa since 1273–

¹ L. S. Dewaraja, *The Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony, 900-1915* (Lanka Islamic Foundation., 1994):pp. 31-32.

² An Arabic inscription belonged to 13th century was found in Bhagavalea. Below the summit of Adam's Peak is an interesting memorial honoring Muslim pilgrims. It has attracted the attention because it is written by the side of a Sinhala inscription of King Nissanka Malla (1187-1196) recording his visit to the summit and also gifting several villages for the upkeep of the shrine.

³ Shukri M.A.M, *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity*, First (Galkissa, 2010):25

⁴ L. S. Dewaraja, *The Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony, 900-1915* (Lanka Islamic Foundation., 1994):37

1284.¹ Interestingly, Alexander Johnston kept a remarkable record that included a reference to a well-known merchant named Periya Mudali Marikkar. He held a copper plate that the king had given to a "Great Mohammadan Merchant" around 700 years before. He claimed that it belonged to Periya Mudali Marikkar as he helped to bring weavers from Saliya Pattana, India. Primarily, gratitude was expressed by the king to the merchant for the assistance he had provided for the country as he was amply rewarded with lands honours and privileges. One of the great rewards he had received from the king was the authorisation of building mosques for their religious rituals. He was also given any land necessary for the upkeep of the mosques.² This is just another significant example of religious harmony among Sinhalese Muslims dating back to the early years, exhibiting the generosity of Sinhala rulers.

When Ariya Chakravarti intended to attack both Negombo and Colombo and dominate some western parts, the Arabs played a significant role in defending their settlements and providing the necessary support to their Sinhala allies. Lorna Dewaraja had written in great words, "*It is likely that the Sinhala army hired Muslims soldiers.*"³ These words had greatly reflected the Sinhalese-Muslim bond. Obviously, throughout the writings of Lorna Dewaraja, while Muslims had a vital trade centre on every side, they did not attempt to convert the non-Muslims into their religion or conquer the state. As a result of their economic and religious uniqueness, Muslim communities had developed independently. They had spread their trade and religion entirely peacefully. Muslims followed this progress similarly wherever they had power, including Sri Lanka.⁴ According to testimonies, an amicable and mutually beneficial relationship had been established between Sinhalese and Muslims since the advent of Arab Muslims.

Buddhist–Muslim Religious Co-existence during the Colonial Rule Muslims in the Portuguese Rule

When Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese sea adventurer, arrived in India's Kalli Kotte from East Africa at the end of the 15th century, the situation had changed entirely. Over time, Muslims established permanent and prosperous settlements along Sri Lanka's coastline. They also played a significant part in developing their trade, where they had a vast influence on domestic and overseas trade. Therefore, when the Portuguese

¹ Ibid.

² Shukri M.A.M, *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity*, First (Galkissa, 2010):35-36.

³ L. S. Dewaraja, *The Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony, 900-1915* (Lanka Islamic Foundation., 1994): p. 41.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

discovered that Muslims predominantly controlled the Indian Ocean's maritime trade, they considered the Muslims to be their first opponents.

According to Abeysinghe, at Puttalam, Chilaw, Madampe, Payagala, Aluthgama, Bentota, Galle, Welligama, and Matara, sizeable settlements of Muslims remained on the coastline of Sri Lanka in the 16th and 17th centuries. There was a Moorish quarter in Colombo, as Colombo was predominantly a Moorish city with at least one mosque. Also, the Moor communities had their headmen in Chilaw, Negambo, and Kalutara, while the Aluthgama community was dominant enough to have three headmen. Further, they had their streets in Negambo and Weligama.

These settlements were proof of the strength and influence of Muslims in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese arrival. Meanwhile, Muslim communities had gained the rulers' trust and enhanced the country's treasury through their custom duty. Also, they provided foreign luxuries to the palace and nobles while offering good value to the local products. Consequently, they were given sufficient freedom in managing their affairs.¹

The arrival of the Portuguese to the Island in 1505 initiated a panic among Muslims. The Portuguese thought that the only thing standing in their way was the presence of Muslims since the Sinhalese were not involved in the export trade. The peaceful barter system had ended as the Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka to capture the trade. When the son of the first Portuguese viceroy of Goa, Don Lourenco De Almeida, arrived in Colombo in 1505, Muslims realised the seriousness of the situation. They instigated the people of Colombo to act against the intimidators. Also, the Muslims strongly disagreed with the Portuguese king's decision to build a factory. Finally, they had to dismantle the factory as many people were against it. This was how Muslims, in the beginning, shut down the Portuguese.

When the Portuguese were engaged to build a fort in Sri Lanka in 1518, Muslims did everything they could to prevent the construction of a fort while instructing all sections of Sinhala society. Further, they warned the king of Kotte that the only intention of the Portuguese was to seize the country. Muslims convinced the rulers and the nations about their contributions to the country, wealth, and prosperity they had brought to this country. They also reminded the rulers of their loyalty as they had never tried to impose their religious beliefs on anyone else.² It is reasonable to assume that Muslims always had a fruitful relationship with the court and the nobility to influence them in making a moral and

¹ Dewaraja, p. 59.

² Dewaraja, p. 61.

sound decision. However, they held in high regard the future of the country, its crown and significantly, the harmonious situation.

However, in 1521, an unexpected and significant situation happened in political favour to the Portuguese. The Kingdom of Kotte was divided into three kingdoms and shared among three brothers. Thus, the disintegration of the fortified Kingdom only strengthened the Portuguese position in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, as the Kotte king Bhuvanekabahu was afraid of the greedy brother Mayadunna, he called the Portuguese for help. They used this great opportunity to avenge Muslims and convinced Bhuvanekabahu to expel them from Colombo. The Muslims expelled by the king were most likely relocated to other port towns on the west coast, such as Beruwala, Aluthgama, and Negombo.¹

Muslims helped king Mayadune and later his son, Rajasinghe, in numerous ways. They fought together in the war against the Portuguese. They served as ambassadors in obtaining the support of the Calicut rulers and served as gunmen in the Sinhala army due to the army shortage. Muslims later used their South Indian power to get a military assistant for Sinhala rulers. The Portuguese historian Queiroz hatefully claimed that Muslims sided with the Sinhala king in battles against them.² However, this piece of history reflects the beauty of co-existence among Sinhalese and Muslims during the Portuguese period.

While the Portuguese considered Muslims as their only obstacle, they sometimes needed the help of Muslims. Thus, they were constantly changing their policies regarding Muslims. Finally, in 1626, Constantino de Sa de Noronha, an extremist who implemented royal orders through his desires, expelled the Muslims from the regions under Portuguese rule.³ Consequently, most Muslims moved towards the Kandyan kingdom while fleeing India. At that time, the Kandyan kingdom was under King Senarath, the successor of king Vimaladharmasurya. Lorna Dewaraja stated that king Senerath welcomed the Muslims for many reasons. They supported the rulers while always being truthful to the rulers. They also had no intention of conquering power or the throne. They were also aware of the Sinhala mind's sensitivity. For these reasons, the king was able to accept Muslims without fear. In the meantime, the Kingdom served as a refuge for the Muslims during their ordeal because it was the only place they could pursue

¹ TBH Abeyasinghe, "Muslims in Sri Lanka in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Muslims of Sri Lanka -Avenues to Antiquity*, ed. MAM Shukri (Beruwala: Jamiah Naleemia Inst, 1986), p. 135.

² Dewaraja, p. 63.

³ Abeyasinghe, pp. 137-140,

their religion without any intervention from the king or pope.¹ It is clear that the Kandyan Kingdom gave religious freedom to the Muslims, and they had a peaceful relationship with Sinhalese, who were the inhabitants.

Further, Portuguese historian Quirós stated that there were 4000 Muslims settled in Batticaloa by King Senarath. According to Lawrie, in the reign of Ragasinghe II, the son of Senarath, engaged Muslims in the battle against the Portuguese and honour of their service, they gave lands to the Muslims while encouraging them to marry Kandyan women, settled them in Akurana.²

Similarly, Muslims supported bringing down the Portuguese' domination from the country. They served their weapons and armaments for the Kandyan King. Since the Portuguese were strong and the Sinhalese could not stand alone, the Muslims' support was greatly acknowledged.³ Anti-Muslim policies of the Portuguese enabled the Sinhala-Muslim community to unite and resist mutual foe. Consequently, they initiated the process of Srilankanisation.

Muslims in the Dutch Rule

Considerable trade links existed between south Indian ports and Sri Lanka in the 17th century. In 1658, Dutch had captured Sri Lanka from the Portuguese. Like the Portuguese, they considered the Muslims their enemies and rivals in religion and trade. When Dutch came to Sri Lanka, many Muslims had settled in the coastal area and the Kingdom of Kandy in the eastern province. Domestic and foreign trade remained under the control of Muslims.

Muslims from Galle, Weligama, Matara, and Aluthgama travelled inland and engaged in export trade such as Paddy, Areca nut to the Kandyan Kingdom. The Muslims of the Kingdom of Kandy collected them and traded them to Indian merchants through the Kandy king's ports. They used bullocks to carry trade goods from one to another place. The herd of bullocks tied up with commercial goods was called 'Thavalama'.⁴

¹ Dewaraja, p. 65.

² Lorna Dewaraja, "The Muslims in the Kandyan Kingdom (C1600 -1815) - Astudy of the Ethnic Integration," in *Muslims of Sri Lanka -Avenues to Antiquity*, ed. MAM Shukri (Beruwala: Jamiah Naleemia Inst, 1986), p. 212.

³ MNM Asad, Kamil, *The Muslims of Sri Lanka under the British Rule* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1993),p. 7.

⁴ Lorna Dewaraja, "The Muslims in the Kandyan Kingdom (C1600 -1815) - Astudy of the Ethnic Integration,..," p. 214. See also, Shukri M.A.M, *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity*, pp. 58 -59.

The fear of the Dutch is one of the most noticeable facts of the co-existence of both communities even during their period. As Muslims had greatly influenced domestic and export trade, Dutch had a strong sense of competitiveness and enmity towards Muslims. On the other side, they feared the feelings and the understanding of the friendship between Muslim traders and the Muslim populace towards the Kandyan Kingdom.

On this basis, Dutch used various forms of oppression against Muslims. They changed the policies, and several decrees were issued in 1659. Only Christians could work as butchers and bakers. If Muslims wished to work in the tailoring industry, they could only be labourers under the Dutch administration. Muslims could not engage in international trade unless they were partners with Dutch. Only Christians were allowed to trade salt.¹ Moreover, foreign Muslims who bought textiles had to pay almost double the duty paid by Christians and had to sell them to colonists, who were given retail control. Likewise, while colonists imported rice tax-free from overseas, Muslims had to pay a 5% fee and were barred from retail.²

Meanwhile, throughout the repressive Dutch rule in Sri Lanka, the ruler of the Kandyan Kingdom benefitted the Muslims in many ways. Buddhist temple earnings funded him. In contrast to how the Dutch treated them, the Kandyan kings treated Muslims with generosity, significant for the Dutch. In consonance with Goonewardene in Kandy, Muslims had complete religious freedom, with mosques and priests operating in many parts of the Kingdom, including one Muslim priest.

In the Kandyan Kingdom, 'Badda, known as the socio-economic mechanism, was the main feature of that time.³ Muslims oversaw madige Badda in the Kandyan Kingdom, responsible for arranging thavalam transport of grain and other supplies from the royal lands to the storehouse. According to Lorna Dewaraja, under Kirti Sri Rajasingha, Sheik Alim, a Muslim, was appointed as madige badda name, and after him was his grandson, Sheikh Abdul Cader.⁴

Moreover, based on Goonewardana, the Dutch noticed that Muslims were in key positions under the ruling of Rajasinha II, further holding posts in the royal arm, working as government physicians, dealers, and

¹ KW Goonewardana, "Muslims under Dutch Rule up to the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in *Muslims of Sri Lanka - Avenues to Antiquity*, ed. Shukri M.A.M (Beruwala: Jamiah Naleemia Inst, 1986), p. 196.

² Ibid.

³ Lorna Dewaraja, "The Muslims in the Kandyan Kingdom (C1600 -1815) - A study of the Ethnic Integration", p. 215.

⁴ Ibid., p. 217.

merchants, and even involved in their state matter representing the Kingdom.¹ Further, Muslims had helped the royal court in various wars against them. Therefore, the kings honoured them by giving them lands and villages. As stated by Najumudeen in his writing in 1760, a Muslim named Gopak Mudaliar informed the king about the Molathanda nilame interestingly against King Keerthi Sri Rajasinghe, and the plot was foiled. In return, the king gifted him his lands and villages and honoured him by naming 'Vijayathilaka Raja Gopala Mudaliar'.² Muslims also supported the Kandyan Kingdom in the battle against the Dutch in 1760 – 1766. Further, Muslims had functioned as royal physicians for many years. They were called *betge* Mohandiram nilame.³

Based on the sources and occurrences discussed thus far, it is clear that the relationship between Muslims and Sinhala monarchs and nobles was confederal, harmonious, and at the strongest during the Dutch period. The Dutch had attempted to create mistrust in the 1680s of the Muslims among Sinhalese and rulers to expel them from the Kingdom of Kandy.

It was said that Muslims, particularly those with ties to the overseas, were plotting with Mughal rulers in India to take down the empire and establish the Muslim Kingdom. For this purpose, governor Pijl received guidance from special commander Van Reede. When the governor mentioned the failure of this attempt, it was implied as 'knocking at a deaf man's door'.⁴ It is important to note that this incident is an ideal example of the Sinhalese–Muslim interaction. Despite different religions, ethnicities, customs, and cultures, there existed a genuine relationship between them. Their relationship has been built on mutual trust, cooperation, and co-existence throughout history.

Muslims in the British Rule

From 1796 to 1948, one hundred and fifty-two years of British rule in Sri Lanka was significantly different from Portuguese and Dutch control. The British eventually attempted to eliminate some of the policies against Muslims imposed during the Dutch period. The consequence of British policy of divide and rule and community politics, which had begun in 1796, was a deterioration of the excellent relationship for over a thousand years into one of rivalry, distrust, and hatred. It was exploited

¹ Goonewardena, p. 204.

² Faleel, p. 6.

³ Lorna Dewaraja, "The Muslims in the Kandyan Kingdom (C1600 -1815) - A study of the Ethnic Integration", p. 224.

⁴ Goonewardena, p. 205.

to deteriorate relations between Sinhalese–Muslims, particularly in Kandy and across the country.

Religious freedom was given to all religions following their respective laws to worship. Therefore, British Governor Frederick North declared that the laws applicable to the Muslims and the code Muhammadan law that was effective in 1806 might be an attempt of the British to convince Muslims in claiming their own and separate ethnic identity. This was not a purely humanitarian reflection but rather the same divide and rule strategy implemented in India.¹

Further elimination of poll tax on Muslims forced by Dutch was another benefit from British. This was an attempt to sever the cordial relationship between the Sinhala rulers and Muslims. While these privileges benefited Muslims in their socio-economic development, the British had several ulterior intentions. While maintaining good connections with Muslims, they attempted to learn about the political situation and study military information to capture the Kandyan Kingdom.²

As a result, the British attempt began to succeed. The bond between Muslims and the Kandyan Kingdom, as well as trust and goodwill, deteriorated gradually. When the Muslims were influenced by British rule, they worked as intermediaries and itinerant peddlers to handle trade between British marine provinces and the Kandyan region. Kandyan ruler began to suspect that the Muslims were conducting trade in Kandy while relaying information about the state of Kandy to the British.³

Furthermore, the British invaded and captured Kandy in 1815 because of the brutal murder of ten textile merchants of Moors who had gone there for commercial purposes. Even though there were other reasons, this brutal murder was the immediate cause.⁴

On February 15 1815, the British took control of the state of Kandy, disposing of its king and signing the treaty of Kandy. Although a few Muslims indirectly backed the British, Muslims fought alongside the Kandyan army. It is important to note that Dewaraja mentioned that 400 Malabars, 250 Moorman, and 200 Malays had obtained military training in the Kandyan army in 1810.⁵

¹ Dewaraja, p. 144.

² Shukri M.A.M, *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity*, p. 75.

³ KDG Wimalaratne, “Muslims under British Rule in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (1796 - 1948),” in *Muslims of Sri Lanka -Avenues to Antiquity*, ed. Shukri M.A.M (Beruwala: Jamiah Naleemia Inst, 1986), p. 420.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dewaraja, p. 137.

In 1817, there was a revolt in Kandyan provinces demanding the overthrow of the British administration. Meanwhile, Muslims remained loyal to the British. Muslims were loyal to the rulers until the British captured Kandy. However, once the British authority was established, Muslims might have believed that they had no choice but to remain loyal to the British. As a reaction, they supported the British in the Kandy revolt.¹ Due to the loyalty of Muslims, British governor Sir Robert Brownrigg was appointed as *disava*, an influential Muslim. Previously, Muslims had their chief, but under the authority of the *disava* of the province, they paid taxes like Sinhala villages to Sinhala *disavas*. This post was only given to noble families of Sinhalese. Thus, both the chief and the Sinhala natives were furious with the new representative. Dewaraja analysed that this incident demonstrates how rulers' tactics were inadvertently causing a split among formerly peaceful communities.

Likewise, all up-country Muslims were eliminated from the judicial and executive Jurisdiction of Kandyan chiefs. Henceforth, British officials tried all the cases related to Muslims only. Further, they promised to pay compensation for Muslims for their loss during the riot. This declaration harmed the Sinhala Muslim relations. At the same time, the longstanding reliance between the two societies was disrupted.

Moreover, the British repealed the Dutch law, which prohibited the Moors from possessing properties in the fort of Colombo. They uplifted the free commercial organisations by breaking down the hurdle to reclaim what they initially had.² At the same time, the Muslims who took advantage of this opportunity succeeded in many trades and commercial activities and became influential and wealthy inhabitants of the country.

Meanwhile, despite gradually increasing influence and development, their political and social educational statuses were deemed backwards. Thus, Muslims faced political and social depression in the country. They refused missionary and English education for the preservation of religion and culture. There were no Muslims on the legislative council until 1889. Accordingly, up to the 19th century, their political contribution was negligible.³

On the other hand, during the 1880s, contemporary Buddhist and Hindu communities correctly understood the present need for their own communities' development. While Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero, Anagarika Dharmapala, Col. Henry Olcott launched the Buddhist movement

¹ Shukri M.A.M, *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity*, p. 77.

² Wimalaratne, p. 423.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

and Sir Arumuga Navalar for the Hindu movement. Muslims gained a lot of encouragement and momentum from these two movements.¹

At that time, Muslims were keenly aware that they required leaders of the highest integrity. In this regard, MC Siddi Lebbe (1838–1898), and Orabi Pasha, an exile from Egypt (1883–1901), were both regarded to be appropriate leaders.² Recognising that the first step was to educate the community on the importance of education, Siddi Lebbe founded the 'Muslim Nation' newspaper in 1882. Following that, in November 1884, with the arrival of Orabi Pasha and in collaboration with Wapche Marikkar, a school named '*Al Madurasathul Khairiyathul Islamiah*' was established in Mardana. In 1891, the three figures founded the Colombo Muslim Educational Society. In 1892, they established Zahira College, which became Sri Lankas' leading Muslim institution over the years.³

While this progressed, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan mentioned in his work 'Ethnology of Moors f Ceylon' that 'the Muslims of Sri Lanka came from South India and were converted Tamils'. However, Abdul Azeez denied these arguments logically as well as historically. He further commented that this was an attempt to prevent the appointment of the Moorish member in the council by the British Government.

In 1915, one of the most tragic events occurred in Sri Lanka among the Sinhalese and Muslims. While the Gampola Perehara case caused the immediate reason for the riot, the foundation for this was laid from the very beginning. Muslims dominated export and retail trade activities in the 1900s. Thus, the Sinhalese considered the Muslims as their trade rivals. Buddhist nationalist and Sinhala newspapers played a crucial role in fostering hostility among the Sinhalese. They considered the Moor as the voices of foreign traders. They firmly believed that Moors must be expelled from the country. Therefore, the voices of National activists fostered ethnic nationalism.⁴

Sinhala movements developed racial differences as an ideology and a mutiny among the inhabitants. In particular, the Anagarika Dharmapala expanded Sinhala-Muslim racism into a nationwide anti-Muslim campaign. Thus, the 1915 riots became an opportunity for those already provoked by the racist sentiments.⁵ Although the 1915 riot was unplanned and evolved into a massive protest, however, few events and arguments which happened

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 427.

³ Ibid., p. 430.

⁴ Rauff Zain, *Sinhala-Muslim Ethnic Riots- a Socio-Political Perspective* (Thihariya: Ibnu Kaldoon Research Institute, 2006), p. 13.

⁵ MSM Anes, V Ameerdeen, and AJL Vazeel, *Muslims and Communal Riots in Sri Lanka* (Peradeniya: Information & Welfare Association, 2003), p. 13.

in the early 1900s had indicated the possibilities of such disaster. During this period, Muslims faced immense panic and suffered massive losses. The Government harshly punished the rebels and complicated this protest. In the riot's aftermath, Muslims were segregated from the Sinhala community. This violence had a devastating effect on Muslim–Sinhala relations. Also, this event motivated the Muslim leaders to form several organisations aiming to preserve their political rights and progress their cultural and social backwardness. Despite this, Muslims rallied behind the National Congress, which had fought for independence between 1919–1948.¹

Ceylon Moors Association was established in 1922. The Moor club was also formed in 1922 as a social organisation. All Ceylon-Muslim League was developed from the young Muslim League in 1922. Thus, three communal elected seats were given to Muslims.

Sir Macan Marker, in 1938, said in his speech which was held at a public reception in Galle, '*...we are minority groups that did not demand equal rights as the majority Sinhalese. Instead, all we needed were suitable representatives and a good government, so I prefer Sinhalese to govern the country.*'² Similarly, in 1945, when Sri Lanka Bill was discussed with the state council, the three Muslim representatives expressed their support. Jaya, in his speech, highlighted that the reason for supporting this was only if we are ready to sacrifice the benefits and advantages that our community can attain the independence of the country.³

Likewise, Sir Razik Fareed's statement was remarkable in this regard. He mentioned that 'like the Sinhala inhabitants, Muslim Moors were natives as well. In this country, Sinhalese and Muslims have lived in harmony and mutual understanding for the past few centuries. There might have been many mistakes. With integrity and good intention, we can resolve any problem. So, we join our hands with Sinhalese'.⁴ Accordingly, let Tamils and Muslims collaborate with Sinhalese to gain domination status for this

¹ Wimalaratne, p. 430.

² *Ibid.*, p. 435.

³ A Mohamed Sameem, *Problems of a Minority Community IV*, Second, (2012), p. 35.

⁴ Athambawa Sarjoon, "Muslims in Maintaining National Integration and Social Harmony in Sri Lanka: From Ancient Rulers to Post-Civil War Context Minorities and Development Administration in Sri Lanka View Project Development Administration and Ethnic Minorities in Sri Lanka View Project," accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337208426>.

country.¹ Therefore, one of the Sinhala leaders, Molamure, stated that 'Muslims are the community that would work with Sinhala people.'²

From the ongoing analysis, Muslims' livelihood under British rule was deteriorated by the divide and rule strategy. Although there were unfortunate events, there was still a remarkable bond between the Sinhalese and Muslims leading up to the country's independence.

Buddhist–Muslim Co-existence during the Post-Independence Era

Sri Lanka officially obtained its independence on February 4, 1948. The political history of post-independence Sri Lanka had been ethnic politics. The leaders used Sinhalese nationalist sentiments for their political gain. The support of the Muslims for independence was disappointingly disregarded. Even though the post-independence period was politically and highly ethnicised, Muslims remained politically neutral and supported the major political parties. Therefore, recent history has failed to uncap on the appreciation of Bandaranaike, which he expressed in the parliament. He stated that the 'Sinhalese community will never forget this and will always consider the reasonable demands of the Muslims'.³

However, successive governments had acted to foster and save the interest of the majority community while restricting minority right since independence.⁴ The Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1945, which the first independent Government passed, had disenfranchised the sizeable Indian Muslim population and despoiled their fundamental human rights.⁵ Similarly, official language policy eroded the rights of the minority. It was called as 'Sinhala only Act'. Jayawardena, the finance minister, imitated a few different opinions of this policy in 1944. Tamil became a state language, along with Sinhala, after various efforts. After several phases, Sinhala was made an official language in 1956 by Bandaranaike. Further, irrigation-based development projects began after the independence, followed by all the governments. As a result, significant irrigation lands that were the property of minorities were taken by the Government and given to the nearly colonised Sinhalese.⁶

¹ Mohamed Sameem, p. 36.

² Ibid.

³ Athambawa Sarjoon, Mohammad Agus Yusoff, and Nordin Hussin, "Anti-Muslim Sentiments and Violence: A Major Threat to Ethnic Reconciliation and Ethnic Harmony in Post-War Sri Lanka," 2016,p4 <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7100125>.

⁴ Farook, p. 14.

⁵ Mohammad Agus Yusoff, Nordin Hussin, and Athambawa Sarjoon, "Positioning Muslims in Ethnic Relations, Ethnic Conflict and Peace Process in Sri Lanka," *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 10 (April 29, 2014): p. 202, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ASS.V10N10P199>.

⁶ Ibid.

Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike declared Buddhism as the state religion in 1970, simultaneously removing section No 29 (2) of the Soulbury Constitution.¹ Meanwhile, the Tamil minorities who were frustrated with Sinhala racist politics founded the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in 1976. Subsequently, the civil war began in the middle of 1980 and came to an end in May 2009. The war had extended for three decades, which caused endless suffering.

Although the Muslim community faced numerous challenges such as brutal murders, kidnappings, forced displacement, livelihood deterioration, and their interests at negotiation tables were neglected, they never supported terrorism or separatist claims during the country's 30 years of civil war. They instead supported the state authorities, helping to keep the national integrity and ethnic harmony.²

Meanwhile, Muslim political leaders who supported two major Sinhalese parties until the 1980s founded a separate political party at Kattankudy, the 'Sri Lanka Muslim Congress' in 1981 September under the leadership of the late M.H.M Ashraff. Notably, the SLMC was founded to address and solve the problems from LTTE due to the government political parties' indifferences in solving their sufferings.

It is crucial to consider the writings of Haris in his Doctoral thesis that Muslims were not recognised as egocentric people as they had engaged in Buddhists' programmes in ignoring cultural and religious distinctions. Further, both communities lived cooperatively while being associated in social activities, businesses, and agriculture.³ Similarly, Ahmad Sunawari Long and others mentioned that the Sri Lankan Muslims community had never resorted to violence against the state or the majority but contributed to not only the ethnic but also the political and regional unity of the country. In the face of numerous attacks and disasters, Muslims had attempted to seek political justice and relief peacefully through SLMC.⁴

There were several miserable riots recorded in history. Following the 1915 riot, 30 noteworthy Sinhala-Muslim riots, conflicts, and other issues resulted in riots during the last hundred years. However, after the 1970s, there were occasional conflicts between Muslims and Sinhalese in numerous parts of the country, especially after the formation of SLMC

¹ "4 Buddhism And The Constitution: The Historiography and Postcolonial Politics of Section 6 G," n.d.212-213 see: Farook, p. 15.

² Sarjoon, Yusoff, and Hussin, p. 4.

³ H.L.M Haris, "Buddhists' Perceptions of Islam and Muslims in Sri Lanka: An Empirical Study in the Context of Da'wah" (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2010), p. 161.

⁴ Yusoff, Hussin, and Sarjoon, p. 205.

Haris mentioned that; according to many Buddhists and their religious leaders, during the establishment of SLMC, its demanding approach and procedures have had a significant impact in creating Buddhists' understanding of Islam and Muslims.¹

In 1976, there was a clash between Muslims and Sinhalese in Puttalam due to related problems of jobs and lands. Many rumours had increased the hostility between the two communities. It was recorded that police had shot several Muslims during the numerous demolitions of shops and houses by the Sinhalese.² In 1982, a personal dispute between a Sinhala shop owner and a Muslim had caused a massive riot in Galle. The problem began in Galle Thagedara, which was initially spread through the *Thuwatta* Muslim village before eventually spreading to most of the Muslim areas of Galle. The *Thuwatta* village had then suffered from total damage and fire. This village was later reconstructed by Prime Minister R. Premadasa and renamed 'Samagiwatta Gama'.³

Further, there were sporadic incidents in the 1990s across the country. In 1999, Anuradapura, *Nochchiyagama* had let attacks on shops. At the end of April 2001, Sinhala mobs attacked unarmed Muslims at *Mawanella* who had come to peacefully seek justice after the terrible attack the day before. The riot destroyed many Muslims' properties, including business centres, vehicles, houses, mosques, and petrol sheds.⁴

After this terrible incident, the parliament members of Kegalle and Mawanella Muslim leaders discussed the solution and constructed preventive measures not to let history repeat itself. It was later decided that both communities needed to lead their people in the path of peace and co-existence. Moreover, All Ceylon Jammiyathul Ulama (ACJU) convened a peace convention in Colombo on May 3 2001, to advocate peace initiatives and ensure Muslims' safety. Likewise, many Islamic organisations, including *Jama'ath Ansaris Sunnathil Mohammadiyya* (JASM), *Jamaat-e-Islami*, *Tawhīd Jamā'at*, and the Sri Lanka branch of World Assembly Muslim Youth (WAMY) contributed to support Muslims. They also encouraged calmness to avoid being enraged by the reports of ACJU and other movements that had many significant matters.⁵

The efforts of the Islamic Movements demonstrated that they wanted Muslims to maintain good relations with the majority ethnic group of the country and work towards co-existence rather than seeking vengeance or

¹ Anes, Ameerdeen, and Vazeel, p. XV.

² Ibid., pp. 27-45.

³ Rauff Zain, pp. 24-28.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 36-57.

⁵ Anes, Ameerdeen, and Vazeel, p. 143.

perpetuating conflicts. Especially in the closing phases of the civil war, Muslim political leaders and the people had cast aside their hostility. They supported the Sri Lankan government authorities in all their actions, contributing to the nation's liberation from the clutches of terrorism.

Nevertheless, ethnic conflicts occurred in many ways, despite the end of Sri Lanka's terrorism in 2009. After the civil war, Muslims in Sri Lanka had difficulty maintaining their Islamic identity while ensuring financial security. In the emergence of Sinhala nationalist movement's organisations, parties had intensified the anti-Muslim sentiments and campaigns. For instance, *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS), *Sinhala Ravaya*, *Rawana Balaya*, mainly consisted of the monks and had imitated social and religious features of the Muslim community by questing these issues.¹

It generated tension among the Muslims. They lived with suspicion, particularly in areas where the community was heavily populated. Although Muslims had been considered loyal to the state for the past years, especially during the ethnic conflict and civil war, these sentiments had resulted in misunderstandings and disagreements that might have harmed the peaceful relationship between Buddhists and Muslims.²

Buddhists manifested their anti-Muslim sentiments in many ways. For instance, the anti-halal and anti-Islamic law oppositions, anti-animal slaughtering, the opposition of Islamic dress code, oppositions of the practice of Islamic principles and obligations, urges for a boycott of Muslims' businesses and services. Further, the Buddhists propagated to avoid interrelation with the Muslim community.³ BBS, which was the progression of Sinhala Buddhist's prominent extremist group, promoted violence and triggered emotions against Muslims. This violence against Muslims occurred as rumours were spread that Muslims were trying to take over the country through their population growth, religious activities, and economic development. Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), Jathika Nidahas Peramuna and Pivithuru Hela Urumaya political parties additionally supported the BBS campaigns against Muslims.⁴

In 2011, the shrine of Sheikh Sikkandar Waliullah in Anuradhapura, which was older than four centuries, was demolished by a Buddhist monk

¹ Ahamed Sarjoon Razick et al., "The Recent Hate Campaigns Whether Impacted the Community Relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka?," *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 7 (2017), p. 484.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Farah Mihlar, "Religious Change in a Minority Context: Transforming Islam in Sri Lanka," <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1632186> 40, no. 12 (December 2, 2019): 2153–69: p11 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1632186>.

and his henchmen.¹ Following this, many Muslim places of worship and teaching centres were attacked under the anti-Muslim campaigns. However, the Government was active in responding to the general issues by stating greater tolerance. Not to mention, ACJU and the All-Ceylon Muslim Council had urged the Muslims to react peacefully.²

Apart from these, BBS had propagated many anti-Muslim sentiments. In particular, the most severe riots against Muslims had occurred in 2014 and 2018 at *Aluthgama* and *Digana*, respectively. These attacks had led to the murders of lives, injuries, burning of residents and commercial properties, looting of personal belongings and arson against the Muslim people. A deadly riot of Aluthgama and Dharga town history was recorded in June 2014. The riot was set in motion at Aluthgama and had later spread to Beruwala and Dharga Town.³

Similarly, in 2018, massive violence was reported in Digna even before the traces of the 2014 riot were forgotten. Due to a personal issue between the Sinhala track driver in Teldeniya, Kandy and four Muslim youths, the driver got hospitalised in the ICU for two weeks. He passed away later, yet it was determined that the incident did not have any ethnic motive. Even though the Muslim attackers were arrested soon after the incident, the Sinhala Buddhist extremist had assigned ethnic perception as the cause of the incident and spread it around.

When Buddhist nationalist organisations instigated hatred and violence against Muslims and their religion, the Muslims' cultures rights, political and Islamic movements have never encouraged them, especially youth, to resort to violence. On the contrary, they have not taken violence against the state or other ethnic communities. Nevertheless, despite the numerous riots, violence, attacks, losses, injuries, murders, and economic downturn the Muslims face, they have always been a peaceful community. Muslim religion and community leaders had jointly condemned the incidents while urging the Government and laws to secure Muslims.⁴

Later, reconciliation efforts were initiated by the Muslims and the community leaders. Non-Muslims were accepted to mosques, Buddhist

¹ Farook, p. 22.

² "Attacks on Places of Religious Worship in Post-War Sri Lanka – Centre for Policy Alternatives," accessed October 1, 2021, p65 <https://www.cpalanka.org/attacks-on-places-of-religious-worship-in-post-war-sri-lanka/>.

³ Mohamed Anifa Mohamed Fowsar, Mohamed Abdulla Mohamed Rameez, and Aboobacker Rameez, "Muslim Minority in Post-War Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Aluthgama and Digana Violences," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 9, no. 6 (November 19, 2020): p60, <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2020-0111>.

⁴ Farah Mihlar, "The Pursuit of Piety and the Quest for Separatism: The Politicisation of Islam in Sri Lanka" (University of London, 2015), p. 12.

monks were welcomed to Islamic events, and Muslims and their leaders participated in Buddhists' communal and religious activities. Distinctly, ACJU played a key role by implementing various projects. Further, each of the Islamic Organisations had operated its unique way.¹

Sulochana Peiris mentioned that the current constitutional and legal framework in Sri Lanka provides sufficient protection and structure to avoid religious violence, according to researcher Gunatilleke, who conducted considerable research on post-war ethnoreligious violence. Regrettably, the lack of application is the fundamental issue within this framework.² Likewise, Meegahajandure Sirivimala Thero, the Chief Monk of Naga Vihara, Jaffna, stated that politicians were utilising the sentiments of people to spread misconceptions about other communities for their advantage by using divide and rule policy.³

It is noteworthy to consider that in Haris's doctoral thesis findings, most Sinhalese in Sri Lanka are favourable towards Muslims in general. They wish to live in harmony with the Muslims who are of the minority. They also think Muslims should be granted absolute rights if they properly request them.⁴

The historical relationship of Muslims with other faiths was destroyed by the Easter Sunday attack, the worst terror attack on April 21 2019. Moreover, it was subjected to severe questioning of Muslim leaders' typically systematic and well-organised religious measures. The Easter Sunday attack, which occurred in April 2019, was considered the deadliest attack in Sri Lanka since the Civil war ended in 2009.

The event became a turning point for the Muslim community for their religious identity and representation in Sri Lanka because the National Tawhīd Jamā'at, Jamaathe Millaathe Ibrahim (JMI), had links with ISIS were involved. As Amjad stated, being a Muslim has become an accusation and becoming the target of religious affiliation almost overnight.⁵

Although prior information was given to the Sri Lanka security forces about the planned attacks on churches and hotels, the information

¹ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

² Sulochana Peiris, "AN INTRODUCTION TO IN SRI LANKA," (2019), p. 20.

³ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴ Haris, p. 255.

⁵ Amjad Mohamed-Saleem, "Tackling Challenges for the Sri Lankan Muslims in the Wake of the Easter Sunday Attacks," *Insights*, accessed October 1, 2021: p. 5.
https://www.academia.edu/40028678/TACKLING_CHALLENGES_FOR_THE_SRI_LANKAN_MUSLIMS_IN_THE_WAKE_OF_THE_EASTER_SUNDAY_ATTACKS.

was not utilised to prevent the attack due to a lack of updates or cooperation on intelligence and operations.¹

To be clear, even more so than any other religious community in Sri Lanka, the Muslim community is still reeling from the fact that the incident was planned and carried out by a group of Muslims. It is devastating as Islam has never encouraged extremism or violence against any human being. Therefore, ACJU declared their condemnation of all forms of violence and extremism as a joint declaration on July 21 2019.

However, However, a community should not be generalised with practising anti-ethnic sentiments. Generally, not all religious followers are racists, be it in Buddhism, Islam, or other faiths. Further, the people of Sri Lanka have understood this reality well. By analysing ongoing arguments, statements, and shreds of evidence, Muslims and Buddhists still live in Sri Lanka with mutual understanding and harmony despite the riots, violence and terror attacks occurring throughout history. It is remarkable the Gunatilleke revealed that over 50% of attacks were non-physical and were only related to speech, hate and propaganda. As for perpetrated political actors or social movements, more than 50% of the attacks and multiple attacks were connected to BBS.²

Also, extensive research covering recommendations and discussions on religious co-existence in Sri Lanka indicates that people of the country are still attempting to retain harmony in the state, mainly through the engagement of researchers of all races. It is certain that all ethnic groups, particularly Buddhists and Muslims, wish to live in harmony with mutual understanding and cooperation.

Conclusion

This study examined the historical interaction between Muslims and Buddhists since Muslims first arrived. Following the discussion on how separation from colonial rule in Sri Lanka began, the status of Buddhist-Muslim relations after the independence was emphasised. Moreover, the causes of the fissures in the relationship between the two communities were also examined.

This historical analysis revealed that co-existence between Buddhist and Muslim communities originated with mutual understanding and cooperation and continued until colonial rule. It gradually cracked

¹ “The Attacks in Sri Lanka and Trends in Salafi Jihadist Activity on JSTOR,” accessed October 1, 2021: p. 2. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19474?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

² Peiris, p. 22.

throughout the Portuguese period due to various causes, and it was further fractured during the British reign due to the divide and rule strategy. Following independence, political, social, and religious elements had influenced both communities' relationships. At its end, the civil war became known as a terrible period for Muslims. The emergence of Sinhala nationalist organisations and their various anti-Muslim campaigns called the Buddhist-Muslim relationship in Sri Lanka was also discussed. As a result, the leading Sinhala-Buddhist national movement BBS has provoked several riots and violence against Muslims and Islam. Unfortunately, the Easter Sunday massacre, which was the most significant terror attack in history dated April 21 2019, widened the divide between Buddhists and Muslims and further tarnished Muslims' image.

Despite many misconceptions, hostility, and uprisings, both groups strive for a peaceful, coexisting life and insist on state unity. As a result, the author suggests both communities take meaningful and competent initiatives with the collaboration of the Government to ensure a peaceful co-existence in the country. The Islamic organisations that represent the community should use a skilled methodology to inculcate co-existence among various faiths by adhering to Islamic guidelines.

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