

SRI LANKA (CEYLON) AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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“Sri Lanka (Ceylon) is an island in the Indian Ocean, 25,481 square miles in area, lying between the parallels 5°55' and 9°51' North latitude and the meridians of 79°43' and 81°53' East Longitude. The island is pearshaped, 270 miles from north to south and 140 miles from east to west, and is separated from the southern extremity of the Indian peninsula by the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait the width of the intervening sea at the narrowest point being about twenty two miles” (1)

According to the census of Sri Lanka in 1981, the total population was 148,60,001. Among them, the Buddhists were 102,92,586, the Hindus were 22,95,853, the Muslims were 11,34,556 and others were 15,263. The Muslims constituted 7.5 percent of the total population.

The country is divided into nine provinces and twenty-five districts. The Muslims are scattered in all the districts of the island. But, there is a concentration of Muslim population in the eastern province.

The Buddhists are the Hindus migrated from India, and settled in the island 25,000 years ago. In the same period, the Arabs and the Persians maintained close trade relations with Southeast Asia. The geographical position of Sri Lanka facilitated their trade activities with southeastern countries for several centuries.

The Island of Sri Lanka was known among the Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs with several names. The Greeks and the Romans named the island “Taprobane”. The Arabs and Persians called the island, “Jazeeraathul yakooth” and “Serendib”, but “Ceylon” was the well known name before it was changed, as the Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

THE RELATIONS WITH ARABS AND PERSIANS

We have historical evidence to prove that the Arabs and Persians had established close contact with Sri Lanka for carrying on trade and commerce. Sir Thomas Arnold says in his, “**Preaching of Islam**” as follows: “In the second century B.C. the trade with Ceylon was wholly in their (Arabs) hands. At the beginning of the seventh century of the Christian era, the trade with China through Ceylon received a great

impulse . So, in the middle of the eighth century, Arabs were to be found in great number in Canton" (2)

Sri Lanka was the great resort for ships from all parts of India, Arabia, Persia and China. It was the meeting place for eastern and western traders. The same historical sources emphasize that in the middle of the seventh century the Arabians had secured domination over the ocean routes to the West while all trades were in their hands.

The history of Sri Lanka gives detailed information of the Arabs' connection with Sri Lanka, "Ceylon was known to Arab travellers long before the rise of Islam. The Greeks and Romans depended on the knowledge of these intrepid sailors. But, it was only after Islam that this knowledge found its way into book written by Arabs and later Muslims generally, one of the earliest of these travellers' accounts is by a person named Sulaiman whose writings are reported in the "Silsilat Al-Tawarih" of Abu Zaid a century later (950A.D). Another early writer is Ibnu Khurdhabe and Masudi who in the mid-tenth century travelled in this part and their work includes both the knowledge of earlier writers and his own experiences, shortly after him, Istakhri, Ibnu Hawqal and Maqdis briefly mentions Ceylon" (3)

The Arabian Sea was the famous sea route to the Eastern and Far Eastern countries. This sea touches south India. It connects the Indian Ocean, the Palk Strait and the Bay of Bengal. The Arabian Sea is the Principal Sea route between Europe and India. " It bounded to East by India, to the North by Pakistan and Iran, to the West by the Arabian Peninsula and the horn of Africa and to the South by the remainder of the Indian ocean and to the North the Gulf of Oman connecting with the Persian Gulf Via the strait of Hormuz". (4)

The world famous mountain of Adam's Peak is situated in the central part of Sri Lanka. It is a historical important mountain. When the first man, the Prophet Adam (Alaihissalam) descended from Heaven, he stayed for many years on this mountain. Holy Quran mentions about descending of Adam from Heaven to Earth. The early Muslim Arab travellers came to Sri Lanka to visit this mountain. Sulaiman Thajjir (851A.D) Abu Zaid (950A.D) , Al-Masudi (955A.D) and Ibnu Batuta were among those who visited the Adam's Peak in the island. In making special mention of this, Charles, Jefferis says, " Indeed , for them all, (Arabs and Moors) Ceylon is not only a home but a holy land- Adam's Peak with its famous footprint". Another historian, Blaze says, " Muhamadans declare that when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, Ceylon was given to them to console their loss." (5)

The Arab and Persian Muslims traded with Sri Lanka specially in spices and precious stones. The world famous Rubies were dug in the southern part of this island. The bank of the Manik Ganga was well-known for its Rubies. Captain Joes Robeiro mentioned the gems of this island and said, " There is an abundance of Rubies, the first

in the whole world - all in crystals and very clear and plenty of Sapphires and Topazes, both of an immense size and highly prized among the Moors." (6)

The renaissance of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula was diffused from Arabia to Western, Northern and Eastern parts of the world. During the periods of pious caliphs (Kulafaur Rashideen), Banu Ummayya and Banu Abbasiya, Islam was spread from the Atlantic ocean to Indian ocean. Muslims were masters of the sea routes from the 8th to the 15th century. They maintained their supremacy over the Palk Strait. The trade and commerce undertaken by the Muslims expanded during this period. The Muslims were politically powerful in South Asia. H.W.Codrington, the Sri Lankan historian, furnishing information of the coins of this period, said, " Muslims are first heard of in Ceylon in the early eight century, and gold coins of the most of the dynasties of Egypt and Asia from that time and in particular of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are found in the west of the island . It was during these two centuries that the Muhammadans attained the height of their commercial prosperity and political influence in Southern India.(7)

THE SHAFISECT

The Muslims of South East Asia follow the Shafi Sect. (Shafi Mazhab). The Muslims lives in South India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and other parts of the region follow the Shafi Sect. The main reason for this sect's great influence among the Muslims of this region was the close contact with North African region. It is found that ninety nine percent of the Sri Lankan Muslims follow the Shafi sect. In the meantime, those who follow the Hanafi sect. (Hanafi Mazhab) arrived in Sri Lanka from North India and Pakistan and settled down in Sri Lanka the purpose of trading activities. When Ibnu Batuta, the great traveller visited the island ,he found the Muslims following these two sects.

At the time when Ibnu Batuta arrived in the island of Sri Lanka from South India, he could observe the existence of two kingdoms in the Island. The main kingdom belongs to the majority community - Sinhalese Buddhists. The minority community of the Hindus had a smaller kingdom, which was strongly influenced by India. The ruler of the Hindu kingdom was ' Arya Chakravarthy'.

Ibnu Batuta landed at the Port of Arya Chakaravarthy who ruled over the northern part of Sri Lanka. The king helped Ibnu Batuta to visit Adam's Peak and he travelled to Adam's Peak through the territory of the Buddhist king whose capital was in the northwestern province of Sri Lanka.

After the fall of Abbaside rule in Baghdad in 1,258 A.D. conquest of Mongol invasion, the Muslim countries were disintegrated and broken up into small kingdoms. The Mangolians, being cruel and barbaric, destroyed Arab civilization and caused great harm to the Muslims. After the Mongol invasion, the Arab's commercial contacts de-

creased . As a result , the trade in the Indian ocean was taken over by the Indian and Turkish Muslims traders.

When Constantinople fell into the hands of the Ottoman Turks who had been the masters of the Balkans for hundreds of years, the Europeans who were to bear this loss decided to take revengeful steps towards Muslims. It happened in Spain within twenty years. The Muslim kingdom of Granada in Spain fell into the hands of Christians in 1492 A.D. Thus a new power arose from Europe against the Muslims. In Portugal, the Roman Catholics Ferdinand and Isabella expelled Muslims from Spain especially in Granada and southern parts of Spain.

ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE IN SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

The Ottoman Turks expanded their rule from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. The Turks blocked the land routes of Europe because of their political advantage. In order to trade with Asian countries, the Europeans tried to discover new sea routes through the Good Hope in South Africa from there to India. The Portuguese captured Goa in India and from there they sailed to Sri Lanka and other South East Asian countries in the latter part of 15th century.

The Portuguese pursued an aggressive policy towards the Muslims just because the latter followed Islam. The great success of Islam was quite clear when it exerted immense influence upon all parts of the globe. As the Muslims re-established their domination in Spain for nearly 800 years, the Portuguese treated them as their inveterate enemies. They named the local Muslim as 'Moors'. The following quotations of Sir Lázaro will demonstrate the attitude of the Portuguese towards the Muslims. "There are many Islands of Moors. They entered Ceylon by trade and money and they multiplied there to such an extent, both by generation and by the continuation of commerce for there came 500 to 600 each year not only in the maritime Ports but even by land there were already villages of them in all the Dissavas" (8)

The Portuguese Authority of Goa instructed their Ceylonese Authority not to employ any Moors in their office. "No Christian should employ Moor in any occupation which gave authority over to Christians which was afterwards approved by the Holy office neither in the case of Moor in Ceylon nor in the Northern countries as regards Moors heathens, were these punishments sufficient to prevent these scandals in spite of all the provisions which were also issued in the name of His Majesty" (9)

The Portuguese were determined to discriminate against the Muslims in the political, economic and religious fields. They forcibly took over the trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean from the hands of the Muslims. They looted and destroyed the ships sailed by Muslims. It is pertinent to quote the history of Prof. Karl Gunawardane who says as follows in his article, " Since their (Portuguese) arrival in Asia, they were

very keen on damaging the Moor's trade of the Indian ocean by all possible means, so as to be able to establish a trade monopoly. They attempted to persuade by threats or blandishments, the rulers of the Malabar Coast to expel all Muslims or at least to place various restraints on these trades. (10)

The Portuguese dominated the coastal regions step by step and expelled Muslims from the Maritime Provinces. As a result, the Muslims settled down in the central province and eastern province. The Sinhalese kings helped the Muslims by offering them lands. In the meantime, the Buddhists and Hindus were on good terms with Muslims. In 1626 following their (Muslims) expulsion from Portuguese territory, the Muslims of Kotte fled to Kandy. Senarat (King of Kandy) who saw in them a reliable ally against the Portuguese settled some four thousand of them in the lands around Batticaloa. (11)

The Portuguese were Roman Catholics and their objective was to propagate Christianity and to extend their power to all parts of this island. But, they failed to capture all parts of this island. They controlled only the coastal lands as well as the Maritime Provinces. They never captured the up-country Kandyan region.

Christianity too is religious based on some kind of idol worship like Buddhism and Hinduism. Therefore, the propagation of Christianity among the Buddhists and Hindus in the Maritime Provinces persuaded them to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. Islam never permitted idol worship. Hence, the Muslims did not accept Christianity.

The upcountry of this island was called the Kandyan Kingdom. The Muslims kept commercial relations with the Kandyan kings. Subsequently, the Muslims of coastal regions migrated and settled down in the territory of the Kandyan Kingdom where the king allocated lands for them. "A strong Muslim habitat in Kandy in the progressive suburban station of Akurana reported to have been granted to them by the king of Kandy in recognition of their services against the Portuguese. (12)

The history of the Moor population of Akurana reveals that three Arabs fought valiantly on the side of Rajasshinghe against the Portuguese. (13)

Thus, the Portuguese failed to expel or control the Muslims in the island. It was the Kandyan kingdom that extended assistance to the Muslims. The Moghul Empire too expanded up to South India during Portuguese era in Ceylon. The Muslims obtained assistance from them for the commercial activities.

THE DUTCH POWER IN SRI LANKA

The reformation which took place in Europe made the Dutch to embrace Protestant Sect. Hence, a sort of antagonism and prejudice that took place in Europe



made the Dutch to treat the Portuguese who were Catholics and are as enemies in economic and embarked on capturing the colonies of the Portuguese. The Dutch from Holland took to trade in the Indian ocean. After the arrival of the Dutch, the Portuguese lost their supremacy in India as well as in South East Asia. With the fall of the Portuguese power in Sri Lanka in 1658 A.D. the Dutch captured the coastal land and established a form of government only in the towns of the western part Colombo, southern part Galle and northern part - Jaffna in Ceylon.

The Dutch too were the Europeans. They came to Asia for colonial purpose. The main motive of these colonialists was to capture the trade from the Muslims and to propagate their religion among the natives. Since the Dutch were Protestants but the Portuguese were the Roman Catholics, the Portuguese were attacked by the Dutch for political and economic reasons in Sri Lanka, but the Muslims were persecuted by the Dutch for economic religious reasons.

The Dutch were particularly severe on the Muslims. The attack on the Muslim Islamic religion arose from economic causes. The interest of the Dutch government and the views of the religious fraternity neatly coincided. Dutch policy was therefore to restrict both the economic power and the religious propaganda of the Muslims in an effort to see it that they do not expand beyond their existing confines and convert more Sinhalese to their faith, " In an effort, their influence with the people, regulations were passed limiting contact between the Muslims and the Sinhalese. It may be noted that Islam was still a proselytizing faith and had lost its former dynamism. (14)

THE KANDYAN KINGDOM AND THE MUSLIMS.

The Kandyan Kingdom had connections with Muslims and Chetties of South India, the North Western Province - Puttalam, the North Central Province - Vanni and Eastern Province - Batticaloa and Trincomalee were part of the Kandyan kingdom. When the Dutch obstructed the trade carried on by Muslims in the region under their control, the Muslims moved into the Kandyan kingdom. " The capital of the seven korala was Puttalam, the chief port of the king, from where most of the arecanuts of the kingdom were shipped across to the area round the Bay of Trincomalee, bordered on Kottiyar , another part of the king was used for trade and commerce. From ancient times, hinterland round Batticaloa had consisted of extensive paddy land and surplus paddy was taken from Batticaloa and sold to other parts of the island where it most needed. The Muslim traders brought cloth from the opposite coast and distributed it among the villages . In view of all this trading activity, the official who governed these areas collected a considerable sum of the tolls and also wielded influence among the Muslims and Chetties engaged in the trade. (15)

The Kandyan nobles, though they did not engage themselves in trade, employed Muslim merchants to trade on their behalf , so the Dutch monopolistic policy

and consequent crippling at trading activity did not result loss of a source of income for the nobles." (16)

This group of Muslim traders were well entranced in the Kandyan power hierarchy and in our period they were part and parcel of Kandyan society. In commercial deals, they worked hard in glore with the Kandyan nobles who avoided any direct trading activity. A few of the weal their Muslims who rubbed shoulders with the nobility claimed equality with the Govikula and were even close to the king." (17)

The Kandyan nobles borrowed money from the Muslim traders when they were in need. The people of Kandy and other central parts of this Island received sugar, salt, oil, dried fish, rice, cloth, silk and other items from the Muslim traders.

The Muslims were highly respected by the Kandyan Kingdom for their loyal services especially medical services. The medical system of 'Unani' - was synthesized with the indigenous medicine. The head of the medical department was appointed from the Muslims to whom the lands were allocated for this purpose of growth and use of herbs which were medicinal. " In the Gataperia Sannasa of 1760, the king rewards Palkumbura Rajakaruna Gopalāmudaliyar with lands that once belonged to rebel Maladanda (also an accomplice) for faithfully informing the king of the conspiracy. Gopala Mudaliyar was the head of the king's 'Betge' or department of medicine and belonged to a well known Muslim family of physicians living in the four Korales." (18)

It appears the Muslims were appointed as Vanniyas too in the North Central Province . One of them was Kumara Vanniya. The Muslim gave considerable assistance for the protection of the kandyan kingdom. Moreover . Muslims were in the Kandyan forces and fought against the Dutch. During the Dutch period over five hundred Muslim soldiers served in the forces of the Kandyan Kingdom.

The official of the Dutch government in Sri Lanka were unable to control the Muslims who lived in the Kandyan kingdom, because they came from places in India like Bengal, Golconda, Coromandel, Tanjur and Madura coast. They sailed in large and small vessels. Elephants, Chank, Shells, pearis, arecanuts were the main trading items for them in the island . The Dutch and the Burghers were unable to compete with Muslim traders in business. " The Muslim traders , both Indians and Ceylonese were superior in business tactics. In open and free competition the Burghers had no charge against them. Their method of trading fashioned through centuries of mastery of this occupation produced maximum result on a minimum quality. They could trade at far less expense than the Burghers and were for more enterprising." (19)

The Dutch started to rule the native of the island according to the Dutch laws and customs. They realized that it was difficult to continue this practice. " They tried to rule the sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims according to their ancient institutions and cus-

toms. Thus, they did not at first interfere much with either their existing forms of feudalism or the caste system" (20)

The Dutch officials undertook the great task of codifying the law and customs of natives. The Muslim laws and 'Thesavalama' of Tamil were among their codification. The Roman Dutch laws, Muslim laws and 'Thesavalama' were recognized in their judicial system. After the codification of these laws, the judges had something definite to go by and not to depend on the opinions of chief alone.

The Portuguese and Dutch built Forts to protect themselves in the coastal areas because of the fear of the natives whom they knew who disliked them. Forts were put up in Trincomalee in the East, in Galle of the South, in Jaffna of the North and in Colombo of the West. There are some other forts too erected in the coastal areas. But, these forts could not protect them for a long time.

THE ROLE OF THAREEQAS AND MOSQUES IN PROPAGATION OF ISLAM

The Portuguese and the Dutch were severe on the Muslims specially in religious matters. They tried to expel Muslims from the island but they failed in their attempt. Then they gave up the practice of inviting 'Ulemas' and 'Shaikhs' from India. They spread the Christian religion among the natives and some of the Buddhists and Hindus accepted it, besides they prohibited the propagation of Islam in public or in secret. Even then the Shaikhs, Moulanas and Ulemas came from India and other parts of the Muslim world and the Muslims built mosques and Thakkiyas to propagate Islam inside the mosques. The Muslims of Sri Lanka followed Thareeqas of Qadiriya, Shadhuliya, Rifaiyyiya and Naqsabandiya. The influence of Thareeqas was strong among the Muslims in the Portuguese and Dutch periods. The followers of these Thareeqas were concentrated in the coastal areas. The problems of the Muslims were discussed and the final decisions were taken in the mosques. The mosques and Thakkiyas had a very important role in the propagation of Islam during this period.

BRITISH RULE 1796-1948

The British captured very easily when compared to the Portuguese and Dutch encounter in the Dutch dominated parts of the island in 1796 A.D. and as a consequence the Dutch were expelled from Sri Lanka. The English East Indian Company asserted its supremacy in the coastal areas and it extended till 1802 A.D. The British government made the island a crown colony in the same year. A governor was appointed by the British government for Sri Lanka.

The British government intended to annex the Kandyan kingdom and awaited a favourable opportunity to launch an expedition. During the rule of Frederick North (1802-1805), the first British governor, there were Muslim traders who were affected by

the orders of the Kandyan nobles. " In 1802 , two parties of Moor merchants, 71 persons in all had gone on trading in arecanut in the Kandy territory. The Tavalamas (Caravans) or trading parties took salt, dried fish, cloth, tobacco and copper money carried on the 602 cattles. Having bartered their goods they were returning with 2945 Amunams of arecanuts valued at 22 Rix dollars an amunam in the Puttalam Bazaar, when they were stopped and harassed by Sinhalese, and finally the whole of their arecanuts confiscated and taken from them at Kakkankuli by order of Pilimatalawa. The Moors were ultimately permitted to depart with their cattles" (21)

The affected Muslim traders were British subjects and they complained of this harassment to the British Authority. In the meantime there arose some troubles between the Kandyan king and his ministers. The king was a descendant of Sinhala noble families Hence, the ministers wanted to expel the Nayakka king from the Kandyan throne. The British , having taken the advantage of the trouble between the Kandyan king and the ministers, took the decision upon invasion of the Kandyan kingdom. As soon as this news reached the king, he mobilized forces from various parts of his territory . When a Muslim village refused to obey the king's order of compulsory military service, the Sinhalese burnt that village.

As a repercussion of this incident, the British governor Frederick North demanded compensation for the losses that the Muslims suffered. But, the demand was turned down with scorn. As a punitive measure, the British declared war against the Kandyan kingdom in 1803 A.D. But, the expedition was not successful from the point of view of the British governor. Some historians have wrongly stated that Muslims were loyal to the British. " If the Muslims had not been affected in 1802, they would have never supported the British and asked for an expedition towards Kandy against the Dravidian dynasty from South India.

The trade and commerce of the Muslims in the British period were well developed because of the plantations that had been open in the hill country. The low country Sinhalese traders competed with the Muslims in trading. The Indian Muslims traders and Chetties of South India too came to the island and carried on their business. The Muslims of Eastern Province were cultivators. The British government appointed Headmen among Muslims for collecting taxes and keeping control over the Muslim community in Ceylon.

THE POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL IDENTITY OF MUSLIMS

The Muslim community gained a political identity in 1889. In response to repeated requests of the Muslim community, Hon.W.M.Abdul Rahman was appointed the legislative council as the first unofficial member. It is a note worthy fact that Muslims fought for this appointment for a long time.

In the British period there occurred the awakening of Muslims of Sri Lanka. The British opened the door for English Education and their religion - Christianity. The Alims or Muslim scholars of this period did not permit Muslims to learn English or adopt western culture. They were rigid in these restrictions. But, some of the English educated Muslims realized the importance of the English language for the development of the community.

Among such eminent English educated scholars , Muhammad Cassim Siddi Lebbe, I.L.M. Abdul Azeez and Wappichchi Marikkar played the prominent role in the revivalist movement. When Ahamed Orabi Al-Misri was exiled to Ceylon with his companions from Egypt in 1883 they got together and started their pioneering work. M.C.Siddi Lebbe pointed out to the Muslim community of Ceylon, that Orabi Pasha (Ahamed Orabi Al-Misri) was not an ordinary rebel but a national hero and that there were several patriotic English men who supported this point of view which found unfettered expression in the mother of parliament itself. (22)

M.C.Siddi Lebbe sought Orabi Pasha's assistance to improve English education in Muslim environment. He wanted to create an elite group in the Muslim community. His expectation was a new type of intellectual leadership. He was admired for establishing in 1875 the Anglo Muhammadan College at Aligarh in India by Sir Seyed Ahamed Khan. M.C.Siddi Lebbe started Al- Madrasatul Zahira in 1882 . It was from this institution that a new group was created to lead the Muslim community of Sri Lanka.

THE COMMUNAL RIOT OF 1915

The Buddhist Sinhala radical elements and coastal area's Sinhala traders were the main group responsible for organizing the riots. It was started in the central province at Gampola closed to Kandy - on 28th May 1915 , on the day of Wesak, the traditional anniversary when Lord Buddha's birth was celebrated, the Muslims of Gampola requested the Buddhists to stop playing music while passing the mosque. But the Sinhala Buddhist radical elements ignored the High Court order. When the traditional procession passed the mosque with the sound of music, the trouble started . As a result of violence, the minority Muslims of Sri Lanka was seriously affected . Sir Robert Chalmers, the then British governor (1913-1916) explaining the riot to the members of the legislative council, said, "Gentlemen, since we met last in this chamber , Ceylon has suffered a great calamity, the essential fact, which nothing can observe, is that one section of his Majesty's subjects had attacked another section. The assailants were Buddhists Sinhalese; the victims were peaceful Muslims. The attack at Kandy on the night of May 28, anniversary of birth of Gauthama Buddha like wild fire it spread from Kandy to Rambukkana and then through Colombo down the coast to Matara raged over five provinces, the four honourable exceptions being Uva and Anuradhapura and (of course)

the two Tamil provinces of Jaffna and Batticaloa whose inhabitants have no community or race, creed with the Buddhist Sinhalese. What has been fallen the Muslims at Sinhalese land in the five provinces is that their property has been looted, their houses and shops have been wrecked, their mosque has been desecrated and destroyed and they have themselves been wounded , outraged and murdered . This is an essential fact, known to all, which we have to keep clearly before over the minds unobstructed by details which are for the present subsidiary. The immediate steps demanded by the situation were to punish the guilty and compensate the victims . To that task the government at once set its hand which task we shall proceed with until it is carried out for the full indication of law and order and for the righting of the wrongs suffered by Muslims subjects of His Majesty in this island." (23)

The British government declared martial law for three months to control the riots. The Punjab and the Marathi forces were invited to restore civil administration again in the island. After these riots were over, the Sinhalese and the Tamils united and formed the National Congress, in order to fight for political rights. But, the Muslims did not participate in this congress because the communal riot of 1915 seriously affected the Muslims of Ceylon. However, the Muslims joined the major communities and fought for independence of their mother country. Sir Mohamed Mackan Makar who was in the government strongly supported the national cause. He spoke on justice and fairplay among the communities. He supported equal rights for every community in Ceylon when he spoke at the political reform conference, he said, " I asked for the adequate representation of the Muslims but I would not go so far as to support the 50:50 basis, because all questions of numbers and rations of a little less are subordinate to the main question , names , good government and what is good government? It may be summed up in two words. Justice and fairplay. Justice between man and man , fairplay to all communities in pursuance of justice and fairplay. I have no desire then nor do I desire now to see the majority community reduced to the position of a minority , on the contrary, on the evidence of my goodwill, I went so far as to say that , I have no objection to Sinhalese rule in this country. That remark alone should show how free my mind of all communal prejudice" (24)

Besides, another Muslim political leader, Dr.T.B.Jayah too espoused the cause of independence from the British ruler. When he addressed the state council he said, " But as far as I am concerned , sir, I do not consider any right greater than the right of political freedom. And therefore , although I am fully conscious of these disadvantages of the bill looking at it from a narrow point of view, yet I am prepared to support this bill" (25)

However the Muslim political leaders like Sir Razik Fareed and Dr.Al-Haj Badi - udin Mahmed joined the majority community the sinhalese, but even then they were unable to protect the Muslims from discrimination later.