

Relationship among Ethnic Groups in the Post-war Context in the South Eastern Region of Ampara District, Sri Lanka

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The internal civil war had taken place in Sri Lanka for last three decades and it destroyed mankind in the country. But the war and terrorism (arm conflict) has stopped by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) in 2009. The fundamental reason for this ethnic conflict was an ideology of ethnicity or misunderstanding of ethnic phenomena, and, which was the huge challenge for the sovereignty of the country. In Sri Lanka, there are many ethnic groups namely Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslims and Burgers and so on who determine their identity and solidarity in various levels. (George Frerks and Bark Klem (Etd), 2004). In past history, Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims were maintained their rigid relationship and they were fighting as unity for the independent of Sri Lanka against British colonial masters. Then, ethnic relationship was broken by some collection of incidents in the past. So this ethnic conflict had growth through some socio-economical and political circumstances of this country. Thus, this paper aim to conceptualize the idea of ethnicity and ethnic relation and to understand the ethnic relationship in the south eastern region of Ampara district through the history. Further, this study tries to examine the current progress of ethnic cohesion among Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims in the area of research. This is primarily a qualitative study. Data have collected from primary as well as secondary sources. As secondary data, the research articles, magazines, electronic sources and literatures have used. The primary data have gathered through questionnaire (50: based on simple random sampling method), and two (2) focus group discussions (FGD) with the participation of local people and social activists. In addition to this, the data have also been collected from the structured interview with key informants. Finally, it found that the ethnic relation in the study area was strengthened in early period, and it collapsed during the war time and, after 2009 again they are maintaining the rigid relationship within the ethnic groups. However, pathetically, the new era of resettlement activities of the government and the emergence of Buddhist movements highlights as crucial issue to re-raise the same ethnic misunderstanding (prejudice) and discriminations as they had earlier during the war period. Hence, this study suggested that this problematic circumstance has to be mitigated by the government and civil society organizations in order to ensure the democracy and the peaceful environment by considering all ethnic groups in the study area as well as in Sri Lanka.

Key words: ethnicity, ethnic cohesion, post-war scenario, prejudice, ethnocentrism

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