

Sri Lankan Nationalism: The Politics of Religion

Imanga Nadeeshani,
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Political Science,
University of Sri Jayewardenepura,
Nugegoda, Sri Lanka (10250)

Vishaka Sooriyabandara,
Senior lecturer/Attorney-at-law,
Department of Political Science,
University of Sri Jayewardenepura,
Nugegoda, Sri Lanka (10250)

Abstract

Politics and religion exist with clear overlap as is evident in research carried out in both disciplines in both eastern and western religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism and Hinduism. It is understood, therefore, that from ancient times to the present day the institutions of religion have a strong impact on the behavior of political authorities and vice-versa. Religion is a critical tool used by political entities to accomplish political motives.

Thus, a common feature in the modern-day nation-states of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which includes the group of decolonized nations from imperial monarchs, is their inclination towards a hegemonic religious and ethnic context when defining the political landscape in a post-independence situation. This triggered the emergence of religious and ethnic nationalism. This paper, therefore, analyzes how religion played a critical role in mobilizing the public for freedom movements; and the effects of religious nationalist movements in mobilizing civil society; and, how societies confronted the aftermath of such movements and overcame them in the Sri Lankan context.

1.1 Theory of Nationalism

Nationalism, by its definition is argumentative in political discourse. Uyangoda argues that, “nationalism was as strong as contemporary liberalism and Marxism in 19th and 20th centuries and even challenging for those theoretical approaches” (Uyangoda, 2011). According to Anderson (1983) even though nationalism is a powerful weapon in politics, it is philosophically

poor. Anderson's ideas, therefore, heralds the beginning of scholarly intervention towards certain critical issues this notion of nationalism has created in the context of 20th century socio-political theory and political ideology.

1.2 Interpretations of Nationalism

There are different interpretations of nationalism. "nationalism is the good faith and the humane thought one can have about the state" (Kohn, 1965). Shills (1957) interprets nationalism as "when a certain group develops a feeling of belonging to that particular group nationalism is naturally established". According to Renan (1994), nationalism developed with the nation-states and it developed further into ethnic identity. Further, it encompassed areas such as racism, language development, politics, religion, ethnic conflicts and minority struggles (Renan, 1994).

At present, Smith (1994) has pointed out eight characteristics of nationalism; origin, territory, ancestors, migration, emancipation, a golden age, decline and regeneration. These factors are common among present nationalist movements across the world, and thus, we can define nationalism as a significant feeling or ideology of an individual about his or her nationality or ethnicity. This feeling establishes the bridge that combines the historical development of such ideology towards accomplishing elements of the nation-state.

There are two discourses about the origin and the evolution of nationalism: the first debate is the constructivist discourse which states nationalism as a modern concept; the second is the traditional-naturalistic discourse. Ernest Gellner, Ellie Kedourie and Tom Nairn are important figures in the first school of thought and John H. Kautsky and Karl Deutsch were also prominent in this scholarly tradition which identified nationalism as a modern discourse.

Naturalistic discourse is far more outdated one, and scholars such as Edward Shills, Clifford Geertz and Steven Crosby are significant contributors of this idea. Constructivist thought, however, is the most recognized among the two in which the ethnic bond is a social and a political construction. And historical sources do remarkable work to establish nationalism in humans through chronicles, inscriptions, ruins, proverbs, legends, religious beliefs, arts,

customs, classical literature and language. These things can trigger and mobilize people's nationalism and may even lead to armed conflict.

1.3 Varieties of Nationalism

Nationalism by its nature and geographical and hegemonic agreement could be identified in few different locations: Western nationalism, Asian nationalism, the nationalism of the minority and the nationalism of the majority.

1.3.1 Western Nationalism

The origin and development of nationalism, according to Western philosophers dated back to the 18th century in Europe and the development for that matter, extended to non-European societies. Kedouri (1960) strong critic of nationalism, describes how nationalism originated in 19th century Europe and later spread into other parts of the world. Though nationalism originated in Europe, the dichotomy between Asian and Western nationalism still exists. Scholars argue that Western nationalism has a secular nature and they have tried to showcase how western nationalism as created on the grounds of political reality and others were not. Kohn (1965) described a secular nationalism and a religious nationalism and concludes that European nationalism is secular in nature. This interpretation has been criticized by Eugene Weber and Linda Collie. According to them, even in western nationalism, certain characteristics of partiality can be seen.

1.3.2 Asian Nationalism

Since the arrival of nationalism dates to the 18th century its spread towards non-European entities began much later. According to Shills (1957), nationalism originated in societies outside of the west based on primordial loyalties. It is similar to tribalism. In that sense, Asian nationalism has roots in cultural aspects as well as a significant inter-relationship between ethnicity and religion.

1.3.3 Nationalism of the Majority

During the second half of 20th Century, a few nationalist sentiments were originated. That is, nationalism of majority within a nation-state and nationalism of the minorities within a nation

state. The nationalism of majority by definition is considered as the majority as the propagandists and protectors of nationalism. There is an inter-linkage between the state and the majority ethnic community and there is an assumption of ideological superiority. This ideological superiority is exercised by the nation-state appearing as a non-ethnic and impartial institution. There are a few factors that trigger the development of nationalism in the majority. They are, oppression of majority under colonization or imperialism, suppression of the popular items of the majority, the remaining majority population being threatened (Hennayake, 1992). This paves the way for the nation-state to bow down to the nationalism of the majority since it is an easy way to establish majoritarian political power. The religion of the majority plays a greater role (Arasaratnam, 1976) than that of others.

1.3.4 Nationalism of the Minority

The term “minority” can be defined as a smaller numerical unit among two or more groups in a state. According to the definition of the sub commission of the Human Rights Commission in the United Nations, it is clear that “if there is group within the whole population, which lacks authority and power, whom expect to protect their ethnic, religious, linguistic traditions; whose traditions and characteristics differ from the majority, is regarded as a minority” (Year Book on Human Rights, 1950). Even though the above definitions differ a little, there are common features among them which mark minorities as numerically inferior, and differentiates the minority from the majority’s religion, language, ethnicity and culture and renders them powerless in questions of authority. Due to these differences, minorities face inequalities. To overcome this situation and to safeguard their rights, the nationalist sentiments of the minority expand against the oppressive majority government towards self-autonomy.

1.4 Features of Nationalism

1.4.1 Diversity

During the second half of 20th Century, several nationalist variants originated. In addition to that, some nationalist variants were democratic, and some were humanitarian. This clarifies that there is no one nature of nationalism, instead it is a political ideology expressed in various ways. This makes it difficult to create a common theoretical approach towards nationalism.

1.4.2 Difficulty in building a dialog between two nationalist discourses.

Another important feature is the lack of space to build a dialog between two nationalist discourses. The reason is these discourses of nationalism are often mutually exclusive (Uyangoda, 2011).

1.4.3 Intolerance

Another issue that arose in 20th Century, according to Uyangoda (2011), is the intolerance. i.e. considering each other as enemies based on differences in language, culture etc. that were promoted by nationalist mobilizations as empowering.

1.5 Approaches to nationalism

Due to recent nationalist movements, nationalist conflicts, and wars, nationalism has become an important topic in recent decades. There are few approaches in studying nationalism.

- i Traditional approach
- ii Modernist approach
- iii Materialistic approach

The classical approach has concentrated on sentiments such as “nation”, “national feeling”. In contrast, in materialistic approaches, nationalism is seen as medium for professional politicians and political elites to gain political power and therefore nationalism has become a political factor (Uyangoda, 2011). The Modernist view, however, is a challenge to the Classical school of thought in which nationalism was born in Europe in the move from agrarian societies to industrialized societies it has expanded to encompass the needs of the industrial societies. Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson are important in this regard.

2.1 Historical Background: Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka

Governing Structures and Religion in Sri Lanka.

When considering religion, it is evident that it has been a driving force in shaping the society of a state. The directives of religion guide citizens towards a virtuous life, hence it makes the task of rulers easier. This helps create understanding in the connection between religion and the state.

A.M. Hocart's research on ancient Indian societies points out that even in pre-historic tribal societies, the origin and the shaping of the leadership had an impact on religion (Hocart, 1936). In that sense one can identify the impact of religion on state governance. In the context of Sri Lanka, it is evident that religious institutions played a critical role.

When researching ancient Sri Lankan history, there is a close relationship between politics and religion. Evidence of these factors can be found in rock inscriptions and in classical literature. Such relationships are demonstrated in two periods where the relationship between governing entities and religion is detailed before the creation of state and afterwards (Dheerananda, 2003). These two eras are known as the pre-state era and the post-state era.

2.1.1 Pre-state Era and the Relationship Between Governing Organizations and Religion

The era before the third century is considered the pre-state era and accurate information on the relationship between the two can only be obtained after the third century. In the pre-state era, there was no proper governing organization and there is not sufficient evidence to prove that there were proper organized religious institutions. According to ancient sources, all religions and beliefs were same during the King Pandukabhaya's reign (Dheerananda, 2003).

Moreover, there is no archeological or literary evidence relating to the connection between religion and the state. Only Mahavamsa, the great chronicle written in Pali language in Sri Lanka, has certain information in that regard. Only after the 3rd century, have archeologists discovered evidence pointing towards the relationship between the two. The ascendance of Buddhism under the patronage of emperor Ashok is an instance of the relationship between religion and political leadership during the pre-state era. Further, King Dewanampiyathissa accommodating the Mihindu Thero and the rest of the monks and creating an environment which is suitable for their religious practices is also another example (Rahula, 1970).

During this time, the custom of offering rock caves (*len pidima*) was also initiated. This is proven by the "Uthimaharajage rock inscriptions" in Mihinthale. According to that, Uthimaharaja who lived in Anurapura offered rock caves to the Sangha (Dheerananda, 2003). And these kinds of rock inscriptions are around 75 in number and have been found in

Mihinthale. Another important feature highlighting the connection between Buddhism and the leadership is the title of “Rakdha” for chiefs in every unit of governance. According to Gunawardane (1999), at a time when no formal governing institutions were created this title can give rise to problems. According to the Dheeghanikaya in Buddhism, the “raja” is the person who makes everyone happy (*janan ranjattheethi raja*). Based on the relationship between raja and the people it is believed that the Sangha addressed leaders as “Raja” (Gunawardane, 1999). As well as in the pre-state era, the personal names used by governing chiefs such as “Dhammarakdha” or “Damraja” also signifies the impact of Buddhism on the governance (Dheerananda, 2003).

Even in Buddhist literature, the term “Dhamma Raja” was used to address Lord Buddha and in Pali literature the word “Dhamma Raja” was used to describe great people. In the Dheeganikaya, “Dhamma Raja” was used to describe the universal monarch Chakrawartha. In conclusion, it appears that the governing chiefs shaped their names in accordance with Buddhism.

2.1.2 Relationship Between Religion and the State after the Establishment of State.

The 3rd Century BCE could be considered a turning point in Sri Lankan political and cultural history. During this time, Buddhism established itself and increased an intimate linkage with the ruling class in Sri Lanka. Especially during the pre-state era, the ruler’s power and authority was limited to a area. But after the establishment of the state institution, power and authority spread all over the state. During this time, Anuradhapura was central and relations between the state and religion heightened. A united governance was possible in less than a century since the establishment of Buddhism. This was due to the environment created by Buddhism.

Buddhism was used as a medium to establish power and authority. Moreover, places such as *Periyapuliyankulama*, *Bowaththegala* in south and *Kottadamu Hela* which were prominent in pre-state era lost their significance and in turn the centrality of state organization was obtained by the Anuradhapura *Mahawiharaya* and nearby places (Dheerananda, 2003).

During this time, the personal relationship between the ruler and the religion was much stronger. For instance, during the pre-state era, offerings made for bhikkhus were generalized and covered all provinces, but after the establishment of state, there were more personal level offerings

directed at bhikkhus. Moreover, king Lajjathissa has built a lake and a *viharaya* and offered that to *Godhgaththa Thissa* Thero. Further, according to Rajagala inscriptions, an income from a lake was offered to *Kubilapathisapawatha viharaya* (Dheerananda, 2003). In *Kotawehergala* inscriptions there is information about offerings made by Bhathikabhaya and Mahadhatika Mahanaga to Thissa Viharaya.

The reason for these kinds of private offerings is a matter of interest. What could be considered a motive is the fact that certain theros were influential in politics and governance. They could decide on rulers or even oust them in certain circumstances. The instance in which the Sangha and ministers tried to overthrow king Lajjathissa and transfer power to Thullathana signifies the paramount role played by the Bikkhus (Dheerananda, 2003). Therefore, having the support of Bikkhus was very important for rulers.

This time was critical, and Buddhism became a state religion. Even the Dravidian kings were forced to embrace Buddhism in exchange for the Kingship. For example, in 2 B.C the Sollic ruler in Anuradhapura named Elara went to Saagiri to invite bhikkhus for an almsgiving. This was mentioned in the Mahavamsa (Rahula,1970). Even kings such as Sena and Guththika, two Tamil kings had to practice Buddhist customs. As well as King Bhathiya (38-66 B.C.), King Maha Dhatika Mahanaga (67-69 B.C) practiced religious customs established by the former kings. Around 362 B.C the Mihidu festival was initiated and King Keerthi Sri Meghawarna made an edict that it should be held annually. According to Paranawithana, those Dravidian kings who ruled in Anuradhapura such as, Dhathiya, Parinda and Buddha Parinda, even though they belonged to Dravidian royalty, were Buddhists in religion (Rahula,1970). This clearly emphasizes the fact that, even though they are not Buddhists, they pretended to be so. At this time, the king of Sri Lanka was the protector of Buddhism. In a 4th Mihindu inscription around the 10th Century, it is stated that a Kshatriya royal became a king to protect the robe and the bowl of Lord Buddha and became highly respected. This is evident in the names used to address kings which are also used to address Buddha and other prestigious Sangha.

In ancient Sri Lanka the rulers powers over religious activities were under the power of the Sangha. For instance, (617-629 B.C) when King Seelameghawanna asked the bhikkhus in

Mahawihara to do the *Uposatha Karma* with the bhikkhus in Abhayagiri but they refused. This shows that the bhikkhus had power to reject even the order of King. The bhikkhus also had the power to choose and crown the King (Rahula, 1970). And sometimes they have violated the traditions of King's ascendance to power in order to crown their own selection. For an instance, when King Saddhathissa passed away, the bhikkhus crowned the Prince Thullathana over the true heir Prince Lajjathissa. The recognized power of Sinhala state includes taking the responsibility to protect the *bowl relic* and *robe relic* as stated in Jethawana inscriptions by King Mihindu IV (Rahula,1970).

This clearly emphasizes that for the crowning ceremony, the approval of Sangha is essential. The crowning ceremony which was originally a worldly activity thus became a religious activity. In Mahawamsa Teeka, the Kakudha object utensils that are used in the crowning ceremony must be made from mud taken from specific places such as Sri Maha Bodhi, the monument of Lowamahaya, Ruwanvelisaya and further should be extracted from the land below the northern staircases of those places. This highlights that the crowning ceremony was indeed a religious ceremony (Rahula, 1970). Working against Buddhism was considered treason. Those who destroyed Bodhi trees and Buddhist monuments were sentenced to death. The death penalty was given to those who rob Buddhist property. It is stated in the Mahawamsa that, when King Elara was travelling from Mihinthale to Anuradhapura, accidentally a wheel of his carriage hit a stupa and damaged. When ministers informed him the damage occurred, he had told that justice should be equal to all and laid down by saying "behead me from this wheel" (Rahula, 1970). In this sense, it is needless to say that one can understand Buddhism as a form of complete state authority.

In the article titled '*Jethewane Sel*' by King Mihindu IV emphasizes that this is a tradition followed by the venerated Kings in the Country (Rahula, 1970). Therefore, it clearly shows that for what was known as a '*Raja Abhishekeya*' the coronation of the King and the consent/patronage of the Buddhist leaders was essential. In the early years, this was a general notion and later it transformed into a religious happening.

After Buddhism became the religion of state, the temples became the center of national culture for the villagers and the political leadership and, Buddhist prelates became the teachers of devotees (Rahula 1970). Accordingly, in the analysis of historical records, it reveals that after the 3rd Century BC, an unbreakable bond was prevalent between the State and Buddhism. However, from the beginning of 16th Century until the mid of 20th Century this bond faced major challenges all over the Country.

2.2. Buddhism in the era of Colonization of Ceylon

Sri Lanka, known as Ceylon from the commencement of the 16th Century until the mid of 20th Century occupied by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British. In this sense, the island was, politically, socially and culturally, subjected to foreign influence among which the cultural and religious influence was predominant.

There were two aims of these foreign occupants: establishment of commercial ventures and the propagation of their religions. At this point, the damage to the national religion was one of major proportions which caused the biggest challenge to Buddhism in the Country.

2.2.1 The Portuguese and Buddhism

At the death of King Parakremebahu VI (1412-1417 AD) who made the kingdom of Kotte the most prosperous in his era, the Country went into a political turmoil. The result was the beginning of War Wijeyaba, which caused the separation of the States of Seethawaka and Raigama. In the meantime, the island confronted the Portuguese arrival in 1505.

The Portuguese invasion caused a severe blow to the state of Buddhism (Dissanayaka, 2000). While trying to achieve their economic aims, they started working towards the propagation of Catholicism. Having received patronage from their religious and political leaders for such religious propagation, they aimed at converting leading social and political personalities and the fisher communities in an attempt to limit the influence of Buddhist prelates.

During this time while the support received for Buddhism was dwindling, the land of the temples was taken over by the government and the incomes were used for the maintenance of churches (Dissanayaka,1991). Meanwhile Buddhist religious centers were destroyed. Popular, educational Buddhist centers such as Wattale Vijeyaba Pirivena, Thotagamuwe Vijeyaba Pirivena, Halawetha Thumula soma Pirivena were set on fire and destroyed. Buddhist main centres such as Pudethale Vihare in Puttelem, Thanapity Pirivena, Ubeya Vihare in Negambo, Kelani Vihare, Devinuware Thileka Pirivena were totally destroyed by setting fire to them (Dissanayaka,1991). In this way, the social leadership that was bestowed on the Buddhist prelates was systematically destroyed and they were pushed out from the community leadership they held.

2.2.2 The Dutch and Buddhism

The Dutch followed a different policy in this regard. They gained occupation in the coastal belt after chasing away the Portuguese created resistance against the Catholics more than the Buddhists. This was a time that Buddhism was subject to major setbacks. During this time, the Roman Dutch law, Protestant Christian education and Dutch language and cultural aspects were introduced in Ceylon.

There were protests among the Buddhists against these calculated moves by the Dutch. In order to break the bond between the community and the Buddhist prelates, the Roman Dutch law was made use of instead of the prevalent Temple Law. The introduction of the Roman Dutch law disrupted the management of the Buddhist Centers. The Dutch worked towards the establishing of Taverns as per the State's policy. According to Sir Emerson Tent, the Dutch used reforms for Christian religious conversions "Those who do not convert to Christianity, no national could become a Mudliyer nor hold public office, will be disallowed to do farming is stated on a pledge that is included (Dissanayaka,1991). Accordingly, with the intention of gaining high office and benefits many people converted to Reformed Christianity. From those who were not baptized, one third of the land was taken over by the Dutch government. Meanwhile the Dutch imposed a penalty on those adults and children who did not attend Church (Micheal,1967). In this way even during the Dutch period the Buddhists were demoralized, and due to the Dutch ways and aims, they were subjected to a many direct challenges.

2.2.3 The British and Buddhism

The Dutch who had taken over power in Asia were defeated by the British and, as a result, the entire coastal belt that was occupied by the Dutch was taken over by the British. On March 2, 1815 with the Kandyan Agreement, the Governance of Ceylon fell into the hands of the British. On this historic occasion, although the Sinhalese lost executive power, the British were forced to acknowledge one condition regarding the protection of temples and religious places (Micheal, 1967). The agreement which was written in the Sinhala language, and this condition was written as the 5th condition. The British assured in writing that Buddhism would be given the patronage of state. These conditions, however, violated by the British and, as a result, Buddhism was disregarded.

As Ven. Prof. Rahula has pointed out, in order to destroy Buddhism, the British followed three methods: creating conflicts between the layman and the Buddhist priests, making chaos in the religious leadership and implementing the Christian education (Thennekoon, 1968). In this way, the British systematically removed the villages from governing the temples and religious places. Governor Mackenzie removed the connection between the State and Buddhism by rejecting the order paper that contained appointments of the leading prelates of the main temples and, a £300 donation allocated for the religious rituals at the Temple of the Tooth was also stopped (Michael, 1967).

However, in order to transmission Christianity in the island, steps were taken to setup a Discoes Commission. Buddhism was traditionally an educational subject that was named an underdeveloped education and the state stopped giving patronage in order to transmission the Christian education (Dissanayaka, 1991). As a result, in 1818, the Buddhists revolted against the discriminations occurred for religious freedom in the British occupation. This is the first occasion in which the Sinhalese-Buddhist chauvinism openly claimed their right-to-retain ethno-religious emblem in Sri Lanka.

2.3 Ceylon's Religious Resurgence and Cultural Nationalism

National religions severely suffered for centuries in Ceylon under colonization. Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims commenced a religious resurgence movement during the period from 1870-1915 with the middle-class citizens of the Country. By the time, this drive became a social movement with political influence. These pressure groups questioned the partial religious and educational policies of the Christian religious organizations (Abeywardena, 2001).

The outstanding personalities who gave leadership to the initial formation of the Buddhist Resurgence Movement were Shri Sumangala Thera, Meegettuwatte Gunande Thera, Colonel Henry Olcott and Anagarika Dharmapala. Those who led the Temperance Movement in 1912 and, as the members of the Council of State in 1931, D.S. Senanayaka, D.B. Jayathilaka, C.W.W. Kannangara and E.A. Goonasinghe were the representatives of the second generation (Ivan, 2013). The founder of the Hindu resurgence was a Tamil scholar Arumuga Naweler. To create religious unity among the Muslims, Siddhi Lebbe took the initiative. To have a common religious identity and to give importance to ethnicity in order to mobilize the public was the aim of the movement. Within these broader movements the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim religions carried out their own resurgence movements. This could be identified as the moment which instigated religious disharmony. The detrimental results of which can be seen after gaining freedom.

2.3.1 Different Aspects of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism

Buddhism was long established in the island and has been identified as the main religion of the ethnic Sinhalese. The established place of the Sinhala Buddhist identification came about with the idea that the prime citizens of the Ceylon were Sinhala-Buddhists and that they believed that Ceylon's total ownership and responsibility is theirs. Accordingly, Ceylon was known as 'Dharmadweepa'. These sentiments have been detrimental to the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism.

Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism did attempt to influence other religious and races. Although the Christians constituted only 10% of the population, they were a community which could influence the society in general. The reason was the Christians were politically and socially standing in the forefront of the community. The result of this was the middle-class Buddhists started to fight

against Christian conversions. The Buddhists started setting up Buddhists Centers to offset the Christian Missionaries and the Christian Teaching Centers and fought against the Christian political policies (Mathew,1970).

In 1873 the Panadura Debate and the setting up of Buddhist institutions and organizations were some of the actions undertaken by Sinhala-Buddhist organizations. Based on the premise that the Christian conversions were the cause of the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, in April - 1883 a conflict arose between the Buddhists and the Catholics. In the conflict, one died and 20 were injured (Jayewardena, 2013). During this time leaders of religious resurgence movement such as Anagarika Dharmepala, Walisinghe Harischandre, worked towards introducing this concept to the people. Even today anti-Christian feelings among the Buddhists and Anti Buddhists feelings among the Christians exist (Ivan, 2013).

When analyzing the following eras, it becomes apparent how the Sinhala-Buddhist Nationalism looked to the Muslim Community. The place of the Sinhala Buddhists remained at a low level. Therefore, the Muslims were able to achieve a higher place economically. In this situation, the Sinhala Buddhist nationalism commenced agitations and violence against the Muslims. Anagarika Dharmepala and Piyedase Sirisena jointly authored a newspaper titled 'Lakmini Pahana' which spoke in favor of the development of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka.

The end result of the ethnic thinking that developed between the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims was the Sinhala-Muslim conflict that took place in 1915. This is identified as a major religious conflict within Ceylon. (Viyangode, 2015). Through this cultural nationalism, the conflicts among the followers of the national religions arose through which the sentiments of consciousness that were built up and still affect communal relations today. Through the conflicts that arose in places like Puttalem, Galle, and recently in Beruwela and Aluthgama, hostilities were apparent between the two parties (Jayewardena, 2013).

In the 19th Century Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism severely affected the laboring classes in the Country. During this time, the labor force comprised of individuals belonging to various ethnic groups and different religions. Ethnicities such as Sinhala, Tamil, Indian Tamils, Malay, Muslim,

Burger, were included. In 1890, while there was unity among the different/ various sections of community, they removed the differences and acted with one class consciousness (Jayewardena, 2013). The following is given as examples of those who went on strike: in 1893 Print labourers, in 1906 carters, and in 1912 railroad workers. During these strikes, workers disregarded differences in race or religion, and fought together in unity (Jayewardena, 2013). On this basis, A.E. Goonasinghe made every effort to organize based on working class consciousness. However, after 1930, the unity of the labor class was destroyed. Among the laboring classes, ethno-nationalist sentiments grew rapidly. For this, the major reason was the economic downturn in 1930. Based on the economic downturn, a large number of workers in the public and private sectors were removed from their services.

The leaders of the Trade Unions disliked viewing the economic downturn as a result of the decline of the world economy, and they initiated a campaign against Malay foreign workers. At this time, the number of Malays serving in the Colombo city alone were about 30,000. In the newspaper 'Veereya'(hero) published as a trade union issue of A.E. Gunasinghe, stated that the foreigners, Muslims, Humbeyars, Boras and the Malay have to be responsible for the decline of the Sinhalese. The Malays were said to be working to lower wages thereby grabbing the jobs of the Sinhalese, as alleged by A.E. Goonasinghe (Jayewardena, 2013). The campaign against the Malays escalated and as a result in May-1933 Protest procession there were slogans that were antagonistic towards the Malays, and a campaign to strike against the Malays commenced and the Malays were assaulted. Even the right to engage in employment was to be limited to the Sinhalese.

Apart from this, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism affected the estate workers who were a minority. By 1921 there were about 536,000 Indian Tamil workers living in the Country. From the beginning, the Sinhalese did not have goodwill towards these workers. However, in 1931 after getting the power to vote in the constitutional Council the debate on the right to vote of the Estate workers was discussed. Primer D.S. Senanayaka stated that while the Indians have a big country, the Ceylonese have only a small island. By giving a right to vote to the Indians, it was said to undermine the rights of the Sinhala. However, some Indians in the estate sector got the right to vote under certain conditions. In the elections of 1931 and 1936 they won two seats. In

the 1947 election, while the Sri Lanka Indian Congress Sabha won seven seats, with their support the Leftist parties won 14 seats.

As a result of these victories, the fear regarding the Indian grew among the Sinhala Buddhists and, as a result of this, after Independence, the Sinhala majoritarian enacted the Citizenship and election laws of 1948 which stripped citizenship and the right to vote from Estate Tamils (Jayewardena,2013). Working in this connection, the debates that took place and the conduct of the Sinhala Buddhists put their intentions on full display (Jayewardena, 2013). A statement made by A.E Goonasinghe also becomes important in this connection, namely that in order to safeguard their rights, the Sinhala Buddhists were prepared to be racists. Debating the idea of A.E Goonasinghe, Dr. N.M Perera said that we cannot conduct ourselves as though we are a section selected by God who are the only ones entitled to be the citizens of this Country. In this way, each time one's citizenship and identity were threatened by the ethno-nationalist movement of the Sinhala-Buddhists and minorities like the Indian Estate Tamils became more disillusioned.

When you analyses the instances in which Sinhala-Buddhist sentiments were imposed on the leading minority, which was the Sri Lankan Tamil people, they can be seen as compelling. The language question can be identified as the first such instance. In the 1950's a public protest commenced demanding that the English language, which was the state language, be removed and the Sinhala Language should be made the sole official state language. In this way, the end result was S.W.R.D Bandaranaike who came to power with the support of the majority Sinhalese in 1956, when he made Sinhala language as the sole official language. In the Parliamentary debate in this connection he stated that recreating the high status in which the Sinhala language was held before the foreign occupation in the Country, is an act of endorsement of the country's independence. The Tamil people, expressing that it was an obstacle to their future betterment opposed the bill.

In this way, while the Tamil movement was built up and received the backing of the leftist groups, who expressed that making Sinhala as the only national language created conflict between the two main races. In this connection, leftist leader Leslie Gunewardena stated that the Sinhala race has failed to move beyond Sinhala Buddhist nationalism to create a Sri Lankan

national consciousness. In this connection, Colvin R de Silva stated that there was a danger of this one small state being separated into two. In the same way the battle against Sinhala Buddhist nationalism created a Tamil nationalism as a movement against the Sinhalese. During this period all kinds of conflicts occurred, and Tamils living in Colombo and other parts of the country were disillusioned. The ethnic riots against the Tamils in Galoya escalated. Meanwhile, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism was entrenched in the constitutions of 1972 and 1978. In the end, the Tamil people rose up against Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism and their struggle went beyond the political limits to the point of demanding a separate State.

In every race, there is a consciousness based on its historic development and cultural aspects. However, the Sinhala community's national consciousness has developed in dependence on a narrative encompassing community, religion and language, within which various religious and nationalistic sentiments have arisen to be used to destroy the rights of others' in the name of safeguarding their own rights. Accordingly, in order to build up a united nation devoid of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, a unique Sri Lankan consciousness must be created.

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