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Ethnic Identity within Cultural Diversity

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The International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) Sri Lanka Studies Program assisted by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) aims at doing cutting edge research on issues of

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In memory of
my father
P.M. Macbool Alim

Contents

Preface

Sri Lanka is a plural society that consists of three major ethnic communities namely Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims who have been coexisting and interacting for centuries in this country, although there were some dynastic or royal conflicts between the Sinhala and Tamil Kings and Princes during the pre-colonial period.

Ethnic consciousness, confrontations and conflicts are new phenomena, legacies of colonialism and have become acute socio-political problems in post-colonial Sri Lanka. The emergence and development of Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms and their confrontational politics during the colonial and post-colonial period paved the way for the emergence of Tamil separatism and the ethnic war after 1970 in the North and East. More than sixty thousand people were killed and nearly a million people were displaced internally and externally during the last two decades because of the war.

It is widely believed that the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is between the Sinhalese and the Tamils and the Muslims are not a party involved. But, in fact, the Muslim community is also a victim of the conflict and the Muslim factor has become one of the major issues in the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Ethnic consciousness among the Muslims gradually developed in relation to the Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalisms from the late 19th century owing to the competition for economic and political opportunities. The first major ethnic violence in modern Sri Lanka took place in May 1915 and it was between the Sinhalese and Muslims. It spread all over Southern Sri Lanka, but in the North and the East the Muslims lived peacefully among the predominantly Tamil community. More than twenty such communal violence between

the Sinhalese and Muslims were reported in the Southern provinces during the last 30 years from 1976.

Sixty five years after the eruption of the major ethnic violence between the Sinhalese and the Muslims in the South, the first major ethnic violence erupted in the East in April 1985 between the Tamils and the Muslims, because of the confrontational activities of the Tamil militants against the Muslims. Eleven Tamils and sixty Muslims were killed in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts in that violence. From 1985 to 2006 nearly 2500 Muslims were killed in the North and East, mostly in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts in the Eastern province by the various Tamil militant groups, mainly by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. 1990 was the peak of the violence against the Muslims and more than thousand Muslims were killed between January and December 1990 and the entire Muslim population from the Northern Province were forcibly evacuated in October 1990 by the LTTE as an act of ethnic cleansing. Vast majority of the displaced people still live in various refugee camps in Puttalam and Anuradhapura districts.

As a logical consequence, the Muslim political leadership of the Eastern province, especially from the Ampara District where there is a significant Muslim concentration, demands a separate political unit for the Muslims of the region as a guaranty for a permanent political solution for the ethnic conflict in the North and the East, that has become one of the major hurdles of the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Muslims as the thinly scattered minority have been vulnerable to the Sinhala and Tamil ethno nationalisms and as a consequence they have developed a strong ethnic identity based on their religion, rejecting linguistic identity in order to differentiate themselves from the Tamils.

In this book I have made an attempt to understand the history and nature of Sri Lankan Muslim identity as an exclusive and reactive politico-cultural ideology that has been constructed and evolved in relation to as well as in response to the Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalisms from the late 19th century.

Most of the studies on ethnicity and nationalism by the members of the relevant communities are ideologically and politically biased reflecting the author's ethnic or nationalist interests especially during the period of ethnic conflict. As Gunawardena (1995:1) has pointed out, in Sri Lanka, "with the intensification of the ethnic conflict and accompanying polarization within the academic community, scholars have been coming under increasing pressure to develop representations of the past which lend legitimacy to the claims of the ethnic group to which they belong. While they have been expected to challenge representations of the past in works of writers in rival ethnic groups, it has become difficult and, in certain situations, even risky for them to challenge or to be critical of representations being utilized by their own ethnic groups. This development brought in its wake a notable relaxation in intellectual rigor in research."

In the present Sri Lankan context, where ethnic consciousness and conflict is at a very high level, it is difficult for an insider of an ethnic community to be critical of the ethnic ideology of that community. However, I have tried to adopt an objective and a balanced approach to the subject; the insider taking an outsider perspective which is a difficult task. I hope this study will be a contribution to the study on the Sri Lankan politics of identity, although there are a number of gaps that should be filled in this study.

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Language, Religion and Ethnicity
The Case of Sri Lankan Muslims

A postgraduate student from India, who came to study the political behavior of Sri Lankan Muslims, once asked me, why the Muslims who speak Tamil as their mother tongue do not want to be identified themselves as Tamils? This was a big puzzle for her as for several others, because the Tamil speaking Hindus and Christians in Sri Lanka identify themselves as Tamils and the Sinhala speaking Buddhists and Christians identify themselves as Sinhalese, but only the Tamil speaking Muslims behave differently. They reject their linguistic identity and choose religious identity as their ethnic marker. I briefly explained to her the historical background of the complexities of ethnicity formation of Sri Lankan Muslims. In the following chapters I attempt to explain the historical, socio-cultural and political aspects of Sri Lankan Muslim identity in detail. In this introductory chapter, I would discuss the relationship between language, religion and ethnicity in relation to Muslim Identity, as a theoretical background.

Identity and Ethnicity

First we should clarify the term identity. What is an identity? Dictionaries try to define identity as who or what somebody or something is; and the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish a person or a group of people from others. However, it is not easy to define individual or group identity because it is not something static. Identity may change with time and context.

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In Sri Lanka we, as individuals, have to establish our identity to the security personnel to cross a check point or to enter a government or a private establishment. What is our identity here? It is merely a small printed card which includes our photo image, name, place and date of birth, sex, employment and most importantly a number. Without this card we have no identity at any of the security posts. The official identity given to us seems to be simple and static. The photo image on the card is our physical identity and the other details on the card give some vital information about us to easily identify who we are. But, even our physical identity is continuously changing. The photo image on my National Identity Card, taken fifteen years ago does not resemble me. My employment and address have also changed. We have a mixture of different individual identities within our family circle, as son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, uncle or aunt and so on, depending on our gender and the relationship with others in our family.

We also have another kind of identity that can be termed as collective identity, which derives from group membership. In my birth certificate there is a category called race and it reads 'Ceylon Moor' identifying me as a member of a particular group known as Ceylon Moors, a colonial invention[1].

Our collective identity may include our language, religion, culture, nationality, caste, class, gender, profession and political affiliation etc. On this basis, as Ivan Ivekovic points out, we all have "multiple and overlapping identities which make up our consciousness and usually they are not mutually exclusive, although we may arrange and rearrange them in different hierarchical orders. These hierarchies are related to the perception of our changing, overlapping and often contradictory power, material and or status interests."[2]

The concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identity in the cotemporary socio-political discourse are not precisely defined and are used vaguely by different people in different contexts. In the dictionaries the definitions of the terms race, nation and ethnicity overlap and are mostly synonymous. However, some modern studies on ethnicity and nationalism try to differentiate and try to define these concepts rather more precisely[3]. The terms ethnicity and ethnic identity gained currency in the American and European academic circles after 1960 in their discussions on the socio- political behaviour of the minority communities in nation states.[4] In the South Asian context the terms community, communal, communalism and communal politics were widely used till 1980, and after 1980 these terms were gradually replaced by the terms ethnic group, ethnicity, ethnicism and ethnic politics, although the former set is still used by some writers.

What is an ethnic community or, what constitutes an ethnic community is a theoretical question and has been discussed adequately in the relevant literatures on ethnicity during the past three or four decades although there is much confusion.[5] However, for my purpose I can briefly define ethnicity or ethnic identity as the awareness of group identity of a community, be it racial, national, tribal or religious, aroused by economic and political motivation and confrontation with other such communities.

The Social Science Encyclopedia defines ethnicity as a "fundamental category of social organization, which is based on membership defined by a sense of common historical origins and which may also include shared culture, religion or language."[6]. Max Weber describes ethnic groups as "human groups (other than kinship groups), which cherish a belief in their common origins of such a kind that it provides a basis for the creation of a community."[7] But, I don't think that the belief of common origin is an essential aspect of the formation of ethnic groups.

De Vos defines ethnicity 'as consisting of the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people... of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups'. According to Paul Brass "this definition can be used for the analytic purposes required here by altering the last phrase to read 'in order to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups.'"[9] Brass also says "an ethnic group that uses cultural symbols

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in this way is a subjectively self-conscious *community* that establishes criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the group... Ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective, self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups". It can be defined in simple terms as "any cultural group of people dissimilar from other peoples in terms of objective cultural criterion forms an ethnic category...the objective cultural markers may be a language or dialect, distinctive dress or diet or customs, religion or race." [10]

This definition is especially relevant in the Sri Lankan and South Asian context. In the construction of ethnicity the differentiating cultural feature is the essential aspect. It can be anything like race, religion, language or colour of skin. These are called ethnic symbols or ethnic markers.

An ethnic group emerges as a politically motivated social force under certain socio-historical conditions. The group's numerical strength, territorial concentration, cultural consolidation, and economic footing are essential for the mobilization of an ethnic group and the group should be in a process of transformation competing with other such ethnic groups for its survival and development. More importantly, there should be an advanced section – intellectually and economically developed elite – with political ambition within the group. As Brass has pointed out,

> "Ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and post industrial societies undergoing dramatic social change. This process invariably involves competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status between competing elite, class and leadership groups both within and among different ethnic categories." [11]

Politically motivated ethnic groups assert their ethnic identity choosing an appropriate cultural symbol and cultivating a secret value for it. As Brass pointed out, "the subjective meanings of symbols of identity are intensified and become more relational (interpersonal) than personal or instrumental. Language becomes not merely a means of communication, but a priceless heritage of group culture; religion becomes not only a matter of personal belief and of a relationship between a person and a deity, but a collective experience that unites believers to each other, familiar places and historical sites becomes sacred shrines and 'freedom trails.'" [12]

Religion and Ethnicity

The question whether Sri Lankan Muslim identity is ethnic or religious is a matter of controversy among some of the Sri Lankan Muslim scholars who have written on this subject due to the terminological confusion. For Izeth Hussein since 'Muslim' is a religious categorization, "it is incorrect to regard the Sri Lankan Muslims as constituting an ethnic group." [13] Qadri Ismail has argued that the Sri Lankan Muslim identity has changed from a racial into a religious one over the past few decades. He says that, "the Sri Lankan Muslim social formation "lost" its ethnicity in the post colonial period; or, to be precise, "lost' its racial/ethnic identity. Once upon a time, from about the early 20th century till well into the post-colonial period, the Muslim formation was seen to have a distinct racial ("Moor") as well as religious identity; as the term "race" slipped out of identitarian discourse, it came to be seen as an ethnic group (also "Moor"); today, it is seen to have an exclusively religious identity." [14] Ameer Ali also argues that Muslim identity has transformed from ethnic to religious over the past few decades. [15] Shukri also says that " the term 'Muslim', denotes a religious denomination and not an ethnic, and not necessarily an ethno-cultural one, but an ethico-religious one." [16] It seems to me that these scholars over emphasize terminological differences ignoring the substance.

It is true that the term 'Muslim' is fundamentally a religious category and in Arabic it exclusively refers to those who follow the religion of Islam, and both the terms – Islam and Muslim – derived

from the same root '*slm*'. However, I argue that in the Sri Lankan context, the term 'Muslim' has gained an ethnic sense and denotes a distinct ethnic group which consciously differentiates itself from the other major ethnic groups, namely the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils. It is also significant that, the other minority Muslim groups in Sri Lanka, namely the Malays, Borahs and Memons primarily identify themselves by their distinct ethnic labels rather than by the term Muslim and the term Sri Lankan Muslims excludes them in the Muslim identitarian discourse.[17]

Islam is only a religious category in most of the Arab countries and pan-Islamism or the Arab nationalism was a strong unifying force in the Arab world in the late 19th and early 20th century against Western imperialism. Although, Islamism or Islamic fundamentalism reemerged in the Arab world after 1970, the Arabs are mostly identified by their individual nation-state identities such as Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian and Palestinian, etc. However, among the Islamic sects, Shias and Sunnis in particular have developed sectarian identities and emerged as ethnic groups in Iraq, Pakistan and some other Muslim countries.

Islam played a major role in the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The North Indian Muslim land owning class and the mercantile capitalists aroused Muslim nationalism as against Hindu nationalism and ultimately succeeded in establishing a separate state - Pakistan - for Muslims comprising different ethnic groups, carving out the Muslim majority regions of North India at a heavy cost of human life and destruction.[18] However, Islam and Islamic nationalism could not last long as a unifying force in Pakistan after its creation. Ethnic nationalisms emerged soon, undermining the overarching religious nationalism in Pakistan, a country consisting of five major ethnic groups namely Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Pukhtun and Baloch. The Pukhtun and Baloch nationalists opposed joining Pakistan even before its creation. "After the partition they continued to nurture a desire to establish their own independent national states."[19] Bengali Muslims seceded from Pakistan and established their own

independent state Bangladesh in 1971 paying with thousands of lives. Sindhi ethnic nationalism emerged in Pakistan against the discrimination and marginalization of Sindhi interests and the Sindhi language. According to Adeel Khan "most Sindhis believe that for them the most repressive form of colonialism started after the creation of Pakistan.[20] Although, Pakistan was created on the basis of religion and the vast majority of Pakistanis are Muslims, Islam could not play a unifying role in Pakistan, and Pakistani Muslims are more and more divided into different ethnic groups and identify themselves by their own ethnic symbols of which religion is not a primary one except in the Sunni-Shia divide.

The following observation of Adeel Khan on religion and ethnicity in Pakistan throws some light on the problem.

"During the years leading to partition, Muslims had become conscious of their religious identity because they perceived Hindu-majority rule to be the main threat in the wake of independence. But soon-after partition, regional, ethnic and linguistic identities that lay dormant among the Muslims were bound surface – once the perceived threat to their religious identity had disappeared, they had to determine their place within the Muslim community on the basis of their identities which were no less important. That was a natural thing to happen in a multi-ethnic state like Pakistan. In fact, there did exist the potential for these identities to be quite explosive because colonial rule had led to an uneven development that had created extreme inequalities between regions, ethnic groups and linguistic entities."[21]

Religion plays an important role in ethnicity formation in multi religious countries where minority religious groups face problems of existence and confrontation with other religious groups. As Paul Brass noted "distinctive minority religious groups in modern times have often developed into ethnically self-conscious communities."[22] The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina are a good

example. They were formed as a religious community during the Ottoman rule from the 15th century in the Balkan region and they were known as Bosnian Muslims or Bosniaks and they also enjoyed some privileges over the others under the Ottomans. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the late 18th century the situation of Bosnian Muslims changed. During the Austro-Hungarian rule from 1878 to 1918 most of the Bosnian Muslims still considered Turkey as their mother land, while some of them identified themselves as Serbian or Croatian Muslims and after the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918, the Bosnian Muslims had to choose either a Serbian or a Croatian identity. "A third group desperately tried to bypass this absurd situation by calling themselves Yugoslav Muslims."[23]

During the communist rule in Yugoslavia the Muslims were officially identified as "the 'Muslim' nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as distinct from the 'religious' Muslim community" in 1967 under the Tito's leadership.[24] During Tito's rule, the Muslim identity, as the Muslim nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina became strong and consolidated; and Islamic radical movements also emerged. The Union of Democratic Action (SDA), the Bosnian Muslim political party and its leader Alija Izetbegovic who was influenced by the Islamist ideology of Maulana Abul Ala Maududi and Mohamed Qutb, tried to re-Islamize the Bosnian Muslims and Alija was sentenced to imprisonment twice in 1949 and 1983 under Tito's regime for his religious radicalism. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, Bosnia was considered as consisting of three ethnic groups, namely Muslims, Serbs and Croats. The population distribution was 44% Muslims, 33% Orthodox Christian (Serb) and 18% Catholic (Croat)[25] and they were highly ethnicized. Ivan Ivakovic observes that "in Bosnia and Herzegovina all religions have been gradually, politicized in order to reinforce the legitimacy of mutually opposed ethno-national projects. The Muslims were perhaps the last to follow suite. A neo-fundamentalist group emerged within the SDA and gained political influence. Part of its influence is due to the quasi-

monopoly it established on non-governmental sources of aid from Islamic countries."[26] In the 1992 election the SDA won and Alija Izetbegovic became the president of Bosnia and the country was plunged into one of the worst ethnic wars in contemporary world history.

How the once highly secularized Bosnian Muslims became a religiously based and highly politicized ethnic community is an interesting question. The ethnic tension developed during the 20th century, the impact of the outside Islamic world and the ethnic war were the main causes for this transformation. Ivan Ivakovic, a Yugoslav born professor of comparative politics observes the secularist nature and the attitude change of the Bosnian Muslims as follows:

"As for the Bosnian Muslims, or Bosniaks as most call themselves, it should be remembered that they were probably the most secularized ethno-national group in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The rather misguiding appellation of 'Muslim' is cultural one, not religious. It was given a preference, because using the name of Bosniak would imply that Bosnia is only their national territory and not the homeland of local Serbs and Croats as well. There are many possible explanations to the phenomena of the secularization of the Muslims, but I will cite only two: first, they are predominantly an urban population living traditionally in ethno-religiously mixed surrounding ... and because they are urban they have benefited the most from Communist modernization; second, they were for more than a hundred years separated physically and culturally from the rest of the Muslim world. On the other hand, those among them who remained practicing believers know well that the Koran categorically commands the protection of monotheistic communities. It is not by pure coincidence that most church-buildings belonging to Orthodox and Catholics which are located on Muslim-held territories are still there, while most mosques in Serb or Croat-held territories have

been blown up. However, the war which has been imposed on the Muslims and whose main victims they are, gradually changes their attitudes."[27]

Language and Ethnicity

Language has also played an important role in ethnicity formation in many countries in the modern world. "In the Western world of the mid-nineteenth century, language became accepted as the most important single defining characteristic of nationality." A separate language was equated with a separate nation. "In the twentieth century this notion has had continued prominence."[28] Linguistic nationalism in India and Pakistan can be cited as examples. After the independence, in India, regionally based linguistic nationalism was a big threat to Indian unity and the Indian states were reorganized based on major linguistic boundaries in the mid 1950s on the following four basic principles:

1. Preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India.
2. Linguistic and cultural homogeneity
3. Financial, economic and administrative considerations, and
4. Successful working of the national plan[29]

Linguistic nationalism was at its peak in South India, aroused by the imposition of Hindi as the official language, especially in Tamilnadu in the mid 1960s.[30]

More than 1600 languages and dialects are spoken in India and fourteen of them are recognized as the major languages and are spoken by 87% of the total population as their main language and the people are mainly identified by their languages. For example, the majority communities of the South Indian states of Tamilnadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra, are identified by the major languages of the states Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu, respectively, and their ethnicity goes by their language, although, there are sub-ethnic formations based on caste and religion. In Tamilnadu, Tamil ethno-nationalism has cultivated a 'passion of tongue' and Tamil is metaphorically imagined by the linguistic nationalists as mother and goddess.[31]

As earlier noted, following the creation of Pakistan, religious identity has become secondary and linguistically based ethnic identity became prominent in political agitations against the imposition of Urdu and other discriminatory policies of the Pakistan state. Bengali nationalism was mainly based on linguistic identity and finally the Bengalis separated from Pakistan.[32]

The Sindhis are also identified primarily by their language, Sindhi, and they had highest literacy rate among Pakistanis in their mother tongue. It was the medium of instruction in the region from 1851. However, after the creation of Pakistan, Urdu was imposed as the official language and it was also made the medium of instruction in 1958. 'Road signs, signboards, and voters' lists' were in Urdu. "The efforts to do away with Sindhi identity were stretched to such preposterous limits that postmen were advised not to deliver mail that carried the word Sindh in the address."[33]

The Sindhi ethno-nationalism had its roots in the discriminatory language policy of the Pakistani state, the influx of Urdu speaking Muhajirs into the region and their domination, and the economic disparity.[34] The Sindhi nationalists had to fight for their language, economic and political rights, and the Sindh became Pakistan's most violent province and its capital Karachi became the most dangerous city of Asia and was termed the 'city of death'[35]

The Sri Lankan Context

In the Sri Lankan context, language and religion have played a major role in ethnicity formation during the colonial and post-colonial period. Sinhalese and Tamil ethnicities are marked mainly by languages, Sinhala and Tamil respectively. Each of these ethnic groups includes a minority religious group - that is Christian, Catholics or Protestant. Sinhala Buddhists and Sinhala Christians are primarily identified as Sinhalese by their language. In the same way Tamil

Hindus and Tamil Christians are primarily identified as Tamils, because they choose Tamil language as their primary ethnic marker.

However, religion was also used by the elites of the majority religious groups of Sinhala and Tamil speaking communities, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to consolidate their ethnic identity and to differentiate themselves from the Christians who were the economically and politically privileged group dominating the British administrative sector, because of their English education and Christian identity. The emerging Buddhist elite promoted a Sinhala-Buddhist identity to secure their domination in the socio-political arena.[36] Anagariga Dharmapala was the strongest proponent of Sinhala-Buddhist identity during the period. The trend was continued even after independence by the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists; the emergence of the ideology and the movement of Jatika Cintanaya in the 1970s is a recent example.[37] Parallel to this development, the Tamil speaking upper class elite used Hinduism, Saivaism to be precise, to promote Tamil Hindu identity against Christian domination especially in the North. Arumuga Navalar was the leading figure in the Hindu revivalist movement in Jaffna in the late 19th century.[38] However, during the post-independence period, the Tamil language became the primary marker of Tamil identity in Sri Lanka mainly because of the domination of Sinhala in the public administration and the marginalization of Tamil.[39] This political change brought Tamil Hindus and Tamil Christians together to fight for their linguistic and civil rights submerging their religious identities. Thus religion and language played a major role in the formation of Sinhala-Buddhist and Tamil-Hindu or Tamil identities in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese and Tamil elites chose either language or religion or both as their ethnic marker depending on the socio-political and historical condition.[40]

But Sri Lankan Muslims behaved differently. They used only their religion – Islam – as their ethnic marker. Although, they are also linguistically Tamils like the Tamil Christians and speak Tamil as their mother tongue or home language not only in the North and East but also in the interior Sinhala dominated villages in the South, they don't want to be identified as Tamils. They reject the linguistic identity and choose religion as their primary ethnic marker. Ethnicity and religion are inseparable and the two sides of the same coin as far as the Sri Lankan Muslims are concerned. In the Sir Lankan context, it is clear that 'Muslim' constitutes not only a religious category but also an ethnic category. Hence, the term Muslim is used to refer to both religion and ethnicity.

Ethnicity or ethnic identity is neither given by others nor inherently natural to a community. It is constructed by the community for itself in accordance with its socio-political condition. Sri Lankan Muslims constructed their identity on religious lines rejecting the Tamil language as their ethnic marker in order to differentiate themselves from the Tamils and to safeguard their socio-political and economic interests. The Sri Lankan Muslim elite rejected the Ponnambalam Ramanathan's claim that the Sri Lankan Muslims were ethnologically Tamils in the late 19th century.[41] They also rejected a similar claim by the LTTE in 1987 that the Sri Lankan Muslims are Tamils embraced Islam and they are an inseparable part of the Tamil nation.[42] All the Tamil nationalists hold the same opinion regarding to the Sri Lankan Muslims.

In this respect we can see a distinct contrast between the Tamil speaking Muslims of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka. Although, these communities speak Tamil as their mother tongue, the Tamilnadu Muslims never hesitated to refer to themselves as Tamils because they are linguistically Tamils. They call themselves as *Islaamiyat Tamilar* (literarily Islamic Tamils). This shows that the Tamilnadu Muslims maintain both religious and linguistic identities. "Islam enkal vali inpat tamil enkal moli" is the motto widely used by the Tamilnadu Muslims, that means 'Islam is our path and sweet Tamil is our tongue'.[43]

But, referring to a Tamil speaking Sri Lankan Muslim as a Tamil has become a social taboo because the historical experiences of these communities are different. In Tamilnadu, unlike in Sri Lanka,

the Muslim community did not face any major challenges from the Tamil majority, economically and politically, since the Muslims were not a competing community in Tamilnadu as in North India. However, the situation is gradually changing in Tamilnadu too in recent times due to the challenges that the Muslim community faces from Hindutva forces especially the RSS. But, Tamilnadu Muslims have not rejected the label of *Islaamiyat Tamilar* so far, while the Sri Lankan Muslims rejected it.

A Sri Lankan Muslim feels uncomfortable and provoked when he hears a respectable Tamilnadu Muslim calling himself a Tamil in a public meeting. Recently, two prominent Muslims from Tamilnadu, a college lecturer and a leading member of Tamilnadu Muslim League, who visited Sri Lanka, publicly expressed their views that 'The Tamil speaking Muslims were Tamils' and it provoked the local Muslims' sentiment and a popular journalist wrote an article refuting their statement. His article was entitled in Tamil 'Ilankai Muslimkal Thamilarkal alla' (Sri Lankan Muslims are not Tamils).[44]

Similarly, for Tamil speaking Hindus and Muslims in Tamilnadu, it is very difficult to understand the conflict between Tamils and Muslims in Sri Lanka, because they know only of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the Indian context. In Tamilnadu the contrast is between Hindus and Muslims, which is clearly based on religion. But in the Sri Lankan context, the contrast is between Tamils and Muslims or Sinhalese and Muslims. This contrast is not between the same categories of religion as in Hindus and Muslims or of language as in Sinhala and Tamil but between two different categories of language and religion. Thus, it is clear that the ethnicity of Sri Lankan Muslims is not defined by language as in the case of Sinhalese and Tamils but by religion. In the Sri Lankan Context 'Muslim' is a category of both religious and ethnic. That is why Sri Lankan Muslims have been giving more importance to their religion than to their language.

End Notes and References

1. The term Ceylon Moors, introduced by the Portuguese, came into existence as an official category only during the British rule in Sri Lanka, although the community – the Muslims- has uninterrupted history for a thousand years in this country. The term Moors was gradually replaced by the term Muslims during the last few decades. See Chap.2 for details.
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3. See for example, Paul Brass (1991), pp.18-40)
4. See, Raymond Williams (1988) *Keywords*, for various meanings of the words race, nation and ethnic.
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6. Adam Kuper & Jessica Kuper, 1996:260.
7. Ibid p.261.
8. Quoted in Paul Brass (1991:10).
9. Ibid.p19
10. Ibid. p.19
11. Ibid. p.25
12. Ibid. p.22
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14. Ismail, Qadri (1995), "Unmooring Identity: The Antinomies of Elite Muslim Self-Representation in Modern Sri Lanka." in Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail, Ed.(1995) p.59
15. Ameer Ali (2000) "Plural Identities and Political Choices of the Muslim Community: Survival Game."
16. Shukri, M.A.M., (1986), p.iv.
17. See Chapter-2 for detailed discussion.
18. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed and nearly 17 million people were displaced from both sides during the partition of India in 1947.
19. Khan, Adeel (2005) p.15.
20. Ibid p.137.
21. Ibid. p.137.
22. Brass, Paul (1991), p.24.
23. Clayer, Nathalie and Popovic, Alexandre (1998), "Muslim Identity in the Balkans in the Post-Ottoman Period" in Mushirul Hasan, Ed. (1998), p409.
24. Ibid. p.411.

25. Ibid. p. 413.
26. Ivan Ivakovic (1998), p.478.
27. Ibid. p.477.
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30. See, Mohan Kumaramangalam, S. (1965) *India's Language Crisis*, NCBH, Madras.
31. See, Sumathi Ramaswami (1998), *Passion of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India 1891-1970*, for a detailed discussion on the linguistic nationalism in Tamilnadu, India.
32. See, Asim Roy (1996), *Islam in South Asia: A Regional Perspective*, for the evolution of Bengali Muslim Identity.
33. Khan, Adeel (2005) p.143.
34. Ibid. pp.127-156.
35. Ibid. p.155.
36. For the formation of Sinhala-Buddhist identity, see, Gananath Obeyesekera (1979), "The Vicissitudes of the Sinhala Buddhist Identity through Time and Change" in Michael Roberts, Ed. (1979), pp.279-313.
37. Seniviratne, H.L.(2000), *Buddhism, Identity and Conflict*, ICES, Colombo
38. See Chapter 4 for discussion on Hindu revivalism.
39. See for detailed information on language and politics in Sri Lanka, Robert N. Kerney (1967), *Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina.
40. Brass, Paul, (1991), pp. 30-32.
41. See Chapter 4 for detailed discussion
42. *Islaamiyat Tamilarum Eelaviduthlaip Pooraaddamum* (Islamic Tamils and the Liberation Struggle of Elam), A pamphlet published by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, 1987.
43. Some scholars who studied the Tamil speaking Muslims of Tamilnadu also use the term Tamil Muslims to refer to them. (See More, J.B.P, (2004, 1997)), but no one uses such a term to refer to Sri Lankan Muslims.
44. Nurrulhaq, M.M.M., (2006), *Muslim Poorviham*, Marutham kalai Ilakkiya Vaddam, Sainthamaruthu. Pp.30-33.

Chapter - 2

Muslims in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Muslims

This chapter deals with the traditional sub grouping of the Muslims in Sri Lanka focusing on the Sri Lankan Muslims, the major ethnic group widely known as Ceylon Moors or Sri Lankan Moors. The change in the label of identity from Moors and Mohammedans to Muslims is discussed in detail. It is also argued in this chapter that, although Sri Lankan Muslims constitute around 7% of the total population of Sri Lanka, the thinly scattered nature of their distribution all over the country, without territorial concentration except in the South-eastern part of the country, determines their socio-political behaviour and cultural diversity.

The Muslims in Sri Lanka are traditionally divided into five different ethnic groups, namely Ceylon/ Sri Lankan Moors, Coast / Indian Moors, Malays, Borahs and Memons. A brief description of each minority group is given in the following pages followed by a detailed description of the major group.

Borahs and Memons

The Borahs and Memons are North Indian business communities who settled in Sri Lanka during the British rule, living mainly in Colombo and Kandy. Some of them lived in Jaffna till the end of 1980s. Both groups are identified by the local Muslims as Baay, the derivation of the word Bhoy which means brother, used by the Borahs and Memons to address their group members.

The Borahs' original homeland is Gujarat in North India. They were converted to Islam during the 11th century and they are the only Muslim minority group in Sri Lanka who belong to the Shia sect of Islam. There are several sub groups within the Shia sect and the Sri Lankan Borahs belong to the Dawoodi sect. They speak a dialect of Gujarati as their home language and they are mostly multilingual. They use Tamil, Sinhala and English for their business and day to day communication with the other communities and they have chosen Sinhala or English as their medium of education.

The term Borah seems to be derived from the Gujarati word *vohra* that means to trade or trader and the Sri Lankan Borahs are mostly traders. A few Borah business settlements were established in Sri Lanka in the mid 19th century. Careemjee Jaffrejee, the oldest Borah firm in Sri Lanka was established in 1851. During the late 19th century and in the early 20th century the Borahs firmly established themselves as export and import merchants in Sri Lanka. The following ten prominent Borah firms of that time have been listed in Wright's Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon: E. G. Adamali & Co., Careemjee Jafferjee, Gulam Hussain Shaiktayeb & Co., Hassanaly Dawoodbhoy, Hoosenbhoy Mohamedbhoy Moosajee, A. H. S. Jeevunjee & Co., A.E.S. Jeevunjee, Moosajee Mulla Ebhramjee, Moosabhoy Shaikh Hebtallabhoy Abdulay, and T. A N. Noorbhoy & Co.

E. G. Adamali & Co. was the leading Borah firm of that time. They were the largest importers of rice and other items. They also owned a *buggulows* and were sailing between Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nicobar and other islands expanding their trade. The Borahs also bought estates and other properties and engaged in some industries too. The Mohmedi Oil Mills was owned by a Borah firm in the first decade of the 20th century and 300 persons were employed in that industry. The Wellawtta Spinning and Weaving Mill was also initially owned by a Borah firm.[1]

The Borahs were economically powerful till the advent of independence and they were able to get political representation even in the Legislative Council and the Colombo Municipal Council. E. G. Adamaly, a prominent trader from the Borah community, was one of the members who represented the Indians in the legislative Council from 1920 to 1925. Alibhoy Dawoodbhoy, another prominent trader, was also a nominated member. Kurban Adamaly was Deputy Mayor and S. H. Moosajee was an elected member of the Colombo Municipal Council.

At present there are around 3000 members of the Borah community living in this country. Most of them run textile shops and some other small business mainly in Colombo and Kandy. There are also a few English educated professionals – doctors, lawyers and accountants – among them.

Borahs are a highly centralized community governed by their spiritual leader the Dai ul Mutlaq, who is based in India. He is the administrative head of the community and each member of the community is obliged to pay various kinds of taxes to him. The personal and public life of a Borah is strictly controlled by the Dai.[2]

The Borahs maintain their own mosques, madarasas, community centers and also their burial-ground in Colombo. They strictly maintain their socio-cultural identity as a minority religious group and are exclusively endogamous.

Memons also as a business community settled in Sri Lanka during the British rule. Unlike the Borahs, they are Sunni Muslims; belonging to the Hanafi School of *sharia* law. The term Memon is supposed to be derived from the Arabic word '*moomeen*' (a true believer in Islam). Their original homeland was Kathyavar in the Gujarat province of India.

The Memons first arrived in Sri Lanka in 1870 as small scale textile traders. However, they had well established themselves during the early 20th century as one of the leading trading communities centered mainly in Colombo. There are nearly 6000 Memons living in Sri Lanka at present. They speak a mixed dialect of Gujarati and Sindi as their home language and they call it Memni or Memon language which is only spoken. In the early period the Memons

used Gujarati for their writing purposes. Like the Borahs, Memons also use Tamil, Sinhala and English for inter-communal communication and they use one of these languages, mainly Sinhalese or English as their medium of education. Although Memons are mainly traders, they are also involved in the garment industry. There is also a small educated professional class among them consisting of doctors, lawyers and accountants. There are some well-known public figures among the Memons. Haji Usman Baila was a prominent social worker in the late 20th century, his relative Hussain Baila is a Deputy Minister in the present Government, Hashim Omar is a well-known philanthropist who generously helps writers and artists to promote art and literature in Sri Lanka, Memon Kavi, the pen name of Abdul Razak, is one of the prominent poets in Sri Lanka who writes in Tamil. He is the only poet who has emerged from the Memon community so far. He has published several anthologies of poems.

Memons maintain their cultural identity as a separate ethnic group. They have a community organization, called the Sri Lanka Memon Association that celebrated its Golden Jubilee recently. Like the Borahs the Memons too exclusively endogamous. They have their own Memon Hanafi mosques in Colombo and Kandy and maintain a public Memon Hall in Colombo for their community gatherings, which is also rented for use by other communities too.

The Sri Lankan Malays

The Malays are the second largest minority Muslim community in Sri Lanka. They constitute around 4% of the total Muslim population in the country and they maintain their distinct ethnic identity.

The Malays settled in Sri Lanka in the 17th century during the Dutch rule. They were brought by the Dutch as either political exiles or to serve in their military establishments. However, Sri Lanka had contact with the people of the Malay Peninsula even before the arrival of the European colonizers. According to the Culavamsa, the Sinhala chronicle, Chandrabhanu, the king of Malay Peninsula

invaded the Island during the mid 13th century and became the ruler of the Jaffna kingdom.[3] The place names like Cavakachery (Java settlement) in Jaffna and Hambantota (derived from sampan, the Malay word for vessel, borrowed from Chinese) in the South are some indications of earlier Malay contact with Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka had earlier connections with the Malay Peninsula, the present Malays in this country are the descendants of the Malays who were brought by the Dutch during their rule.

Hussainmiya divides the Malays brought to Sri Lanka by the Dutch into two main groups. "The first group consisted of Indonesian political exiles as well as other section of deportees banished here by the Batavian government, the other group consisted of all other categories of 'Malays' who came here to serve the Dutch in various fields, especially in the military establishment."[4] Among the exiles there were kings, princes, aristocrats and other kinds of nobles who were considered a threat to the Dutch rule in the Indonesian Archipelago. They settled with their families here. Another group of exiles were the convicts of various crimes. They were deported to Sri Lanka as prisoners. The Dutch government decided in 1782 to enlist the deportees, except the branded criminals, into the army. "Those who were set free had the opportunity to raise families here and settle down permanently."[5]

Malays were brought in large numbers by the Dutch to serve in their army to fight the Portuguese and the Sinhalese troops. A small number of Malays were also brought as slaves to serve in the government institutions, to serve some rich private individuals and also to serve the political exiles.[6] There were other categories of 'Free Javanese,' comprising various groups such as discharged soldiers and those who engaged in non- governmental occupations.[7] The Malays were brought from various places in the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula, where a variety of languages were spoken.

When the British took over the country from the Dutch in 1796, the Malay community had firmly rooted themselves in this country as a separate ethnic group. The British also brought some

more Malays from the Malay Peninsula to recruit in their military establishment during the early 19th century. Although the Malays were brought from various parts of the Indonesian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula, they were identified as Malays as a single group by the British. They are now known as Sri Lankan Malays.

According to the 2001 census, approximately 48,000 Malays live in Sri Lanka. Over 50% of them (27,000) are concentrated in the Colombo District and the others are settled in Hambantota, Kandy, Badulla, Kurunagala and in some other parts of the country. Hambantota is one of the oldest Malay settlements in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Malays speak a variety of Malay language which is known by them as 'Basha Malayu,' as their home language. It is a Creole widely known as Sri Lankan Malay that greatly differs from the Standard Malay that belongs to the Austronesian language family spoken in Malaysia and Indonesia, known as Basha Malaysia and Basha Indonesia by the speakers of the respective countries.[8]

Sri Lankan Malays had to choose English, Sinhala or Tamil for their medium of education. Until vernacular education was introduced in the 1950s, most of the Sri Lankan Malays opted for English as their medium of education, and after the 1950s most of them shifted to the Sinhala medium. A proportionately small number of them have chosen the Tamil medium. Some Malay intelligentsia even think that choosing Tamil as a medium of education would be a death knell of the Malays of Sri Lanka, because they will lose their language identity, the only factor that makes them different from the Moors and they fear that they will be submerged within the Tamil speaking Moors by losing their separate identity if they choose Tamil.[9]

Although the Sri Lankan Malays have maintained their separate identity as one of the cultural minorities of Sri Lanka from the early period of their settlement, they began to consciously assert a politically induced separate ethnic identity from the 1920s in order to differentiate themselves from Sri Lankan 'Moors', who were the dominant Muslim group and an influential section of the elite of this group tried to exclude all the other Muslim minority sub-ethnic groups asserting their exclusive 'Moor' identity for their own political and economic benefits.

The Sri Lankan Malays formed the All Ceylon Malay Association in 1922 to consolidate the Malay identity and to agitate for separate political representation. As a prelude to this Association, they held a mass meeting in Colombo on 6th of November 1921 "to urge the British authorities to concede a Malay seat in the legislative council", and they also sent a memorandum to the Governor requesting a separate representation asserting their separate ethnic identity.[10] When the Donoughmore Commission invited representation from various communities on the proposed constitutional reform, the Malay association also presented their case for separate political representation for the Malay community. As Hussainmiya points out some of the members of the Association "even went to the extent of disclaiming at this juncture any affinity with the Muslim-Moor community"[11].

Being Muslims, the Malays had close connections with the 'Moors' and intermarried with them, but they always maintained their separate identity as a distinct community as noted earlier, and they succeeded in getting separate representation in the legislature from 1924 to 1965. During this period the ethnic awareness among the Malays was at the highest level. According to Hussainmiya, the "All Ceylon Malay Association had tried to initiate several ambitious projects to revive the ethnic symbols of Malays. Special committees were set up to collect oral and written literature; also Malay dancing and music were revived. The Malays were urged to wear the Malay dress, and cook their traditional meals and so on."[12] Attempts were also made to revive the Malay language in the 1980s.[13]

During the British period, the Malays dominated in certain government jobs. More than 50% of the police force and the prison officers were Malays and 100% of the Colombo fire brigade was filled by Malays.[14] Fairly a good number of Malays were in the

military too. There were prominent Malays in the public life to give social and political leadership to the Malays. M.T. Akbar was the first non-Christian Supreme Court judge and the first Muslim attorney general; T.B. Jayah was a prominent intellectual, educationist and a political leader. He represented the Malays in the legislative council and he was the first Muslim cabinet minister in the first Parliament. He also served as a Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Pakistan. These leaders were not confined to Malay interests; they functioned as uniting force of the Muslim communities in Sri Lanka as against some of the Moor leadership who wanted to exclude all the other minority Muslim ethnic groups from them.

"Unemployment and job discrimination, loss of recognition as a separate ethnic group and lack of political representation, fear of losing their language and thereby their distinct identity" are the major concerns of the Sri Lankan Malay community at present.[15] They complain that, they have to compete with Sri Lankan Muslims for government jobs, since they are classified under the category of Muslims.[16] Recently there was an unsuccessful move among the Malays to emigrate to Malaysia and Indonesia, from where their forefathers came, owing to this unemployment problem.[17] Some Malay intellectuals reasonably feel that the Malays are marginalized and submerged within the Sri Lankan Muslim community. They say that, while Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers are frequently mentioned as the ethnic communities of Sri Lanka in the "official communications and in the media," the Malays are usually omitted. The omission of the Malays and the inclusion of the Burghers, who are numerically smaller than the Malays distress them.[18] Some Malay intellectuals have expressed the view that, the Malays are "in the unfortunate position of not finding themselves represented either among the Muslims or among the others; if they seek a position in either of the groups, they are pushed to the other."[19] They also say that the 'Moors' are "totally oblivious to the sentiments or sensitivity of the Malays or their political view."[20] This clearly shows the nowhere situation of the Malays and their political alienation.

The contemporary Sri Lankan Muslim politics which itself is confused and involved in inner conflict and confrontation did not seriously make any attempt to incorporate the aspirations of the Malays into their political agenda. The Sri Lankan Malays are politically left out as a neglected ethnic group in Sri Lanka.

Coast Moors / Indian Moors

The Coast Moors or Indian Moors are the labels given by the British to identify the section of the Muslims who came from Southern Tamilnadu and temporarily settled in Sri Lanka during their rule. They were identified as 'Hampayas' by the Sinhalese and 'Sammankaarar' by the Sri Lankan Muslims and both these terms had some derogatory connotations, which shows they were treated by these indigenous communities with a hostile attitude as an alien people.

Although the Coast Moors were separately identified from the early period of the British rule, they were formally recognized and enumerated only in the 1911 Census. According to this Census Report there were 32,724 Coast Moors and 223,901 Ceylon Moors in Sri Lanka. The total number of the Coast Moors was almost static during the past several decades after the 1911 Census as shown in the following Census statistics:

1921	33,000
1931	35,000
1946	35,600
1971	27,400

Unusually there is no natural population increase among the Coast Moors as shown in the above figures, because, they were mostly an unsettled and floating community, who came to Sri Lanka from Tamilnadu for trading and seeking employment and got back to their homes after some time. Only a small portion of them seem to be settled with their families in Sri Lanka. According to the 1911 Census there were around 6500 female Coast Moors in Sri Lanka. Among them nearly 3000 were in Colombo and 1300 were in Kandy.

Ponnambalam Ramanathan (1888) and Abdul Azeez (1907) speculated that there were an unreasonably large number of Coast Moors in Sri Lanka in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to 1881 Census there were 185,000 Moors, including the Coast Moors, in Sri Lanka. Ramanathan estimated that, nearly half of them that is 92,500 were Coast Moors.[21] Azeez also agreed that Ramanathan's calculation was fairly correct[22] and he goes on to say that, "their number must have considerably increased by fresh arrivals during the two and a half decades which have since passed ...the Census Report for 1901 gives the number of the Moors in Ceylon as 228,034. If we follow Ramanathan yet, and divide in between the Ceylon Moors and "Coast Moors," the number of the former alone will be 114,000, in round figures, there being an increase of 21,500 souls in two decades, but I believe that much more than half of the said number of 228,034 were "Coast Moors," for since of late they have arrived in abnormally large numbers."[23]

According to this assumption, surprisingly, the Ceylon Moors were outnumbered by the 'Coast Moors.' However, the calculation of Ramanathan and Azeez seems to be wrong and purely impressionistic and exaggerated, because the official calculation for 1911 drastically differs from the figures given by them. As I have given above, in the Census figures for the year 1911, the Ceylon Moors were six times larger than the Coast Moors. If we take the estimations of Ramanathan and Azeez for the years 1881 and 1901 seriously, we might wonder what happened to both the groups within ten years. We may assume that the Coast Moors might have immigrated to their homeland in large numbers. If it was so, the total number of the Ceylon Moors given in 1911 Census should be very low. Another assumption would be that, the Coast Moors would have been assimilated with Ceylon Moors in large numbers, but it is not possible within a short period. What we can conclude then is that there might have been fresh inflow of the Coast Moors in that period, but their number would not have been as high as estimated by Ramanathan and Azeez, who had different agendas. There were many imaginative constructions about the Coast Moors

in that period and their unreasonably large number of inflow is one among them.[24]

The elite of the Sri Lankan Moors also thought that they were wealthier than and superior to the Coast Moors. When Ramanathan described the Moors as "petty traders of all kinds, as peddlers and boutique keepers, the poorer classes are mostly boatmen, fishermen and coolis,"[25] Abdul Azeez resented him for lowering their position and said that, Ramanathan "seems to have been thinking of the Coast Moors when he penned the above description"[26] which means that Ramanathan's description suited the Coast Moors but not the Ceylon Moors, but both the groups had only a tiny affluent class and the vast majority of them did not belong to that class.

Azeez repeatedly stated that the history of the Ceylon Moors and the Coast Moors were different. He said that "the South Indian Mohammedans are partly the descendents of Arabs – traders and missionaries and partly the progenies of the Tamil converts to Islam"[27] and he maintained that Ceylon Moors were purely the descendents of Arabs, denying the close affinity they had with the Indian Muslims. Islam does not differentiate the converts from the original Muslims. In fact, most of the Muslims were converts from other faiths from the early history of Islam. When some people embrace Islam, on principle, they are considered as equal members of the Muslim *Umma* – the community. The distinctions and conflicts between the groups (Ceylon and Coast Moors) were merely a reflection of economic and political interests.

The Ceylon Moors wanted to distinguish themselves from the Coast Moors from the late 19th century. Azeez also wanted the future Census Reports to show the numbers of the Ceylon Moors and Coast Moors under their respective names Moors and Sammankaarar or Lebbes,[28] in order to officially differentiate the two groups. In fact it was done in the 1911 Census.

From the late 19th century onwards the Coast Moors were constructed and portrayed as ruthless exploiters of the innocent Sinhala villagers mainly by the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalists

supported by the emerging low country Sinhala trading class and it was echoed by the mercantile class of the Ceylon Moors too. Both these groups had trading rivalry with the Coast Moors.

Some of the Coast Moors were big merchants centered in Colombo; many were petty retail traders and peddlers in many parts of the country, even in the interior villages. Some were salesmen, labourers, domestic servants and coolies. Not all of them were rich and big traders and exploiters as they were portrayed.

The following occupation and means of livelihood details of the Coast Moors based on the 1911 Census, throw some light on their socio - economic position.

	Means of livelihood	Male	Female
A.	Agriculture		
	Paddy and other land owners	227	11
	Paddy cultivators & agri. labourers	265	80
B.	Plantation: Tea, Rubber, Coconut, Tobacco& other:		
	Owners, managers & superior staff	264	11
	Labourers & other subordinates	1717	1195
C.	Weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths & Other metal workers	105	03
D.	Food industry – bakers & hopper makers	75	74
	Butchers	159	-
E.	Tailors	258	06
F.	Barbers & Grindstone makers	178	-
G.	Building contractors	15	-
H.	Scavengers & bone pickers	40	-
I.	Transport: Boat & cart owners	422	-
	Boatmen, cart drivers, coolies & railway workers	1218	-

	Means of livelihood	Male	Female
J.	Public sector–all kinds of employments	266	05
K	Domestic servants	1864	60
L.	General labourers	3035	304
M.	Trade – all kinds of trade	11202	204

Ethnic breakdown of traders of all kinds given in the 1911 Census are as follows:

Ethnic Group	Male	Female	Total
Low Country Sinhalese	47910	16055	63965
Kandyan Sinhalese	3110	1598	4708
Ceylon Tamils	12344	11453	23797
Indian Tamils	7506	934	8440
Ceylon Moors	18037	1293	19330
Indian Moors	11202	204	11406

The above statistics show that nearly one third of the Coast Moors, that is 35% of them, were involved in various kinds of trade. This is the highest percentage compared with the other communities. Even the Ceylon Moors, the so called 'trading community,' are far behind them. Only 8% of the Ceylon Moors were involved in trade according to the Census.

Below, I give a breakdown of some of the sectors of trade based on the 1911 Census which shows the competing situation prevailing between the Ceylon Moors and Coast Moors. Especially in the large scale enterprises they were highly competitive. The total number of the merchants shows this fact.

Types of Trades	Ceylon Moors		Coast Moors	
	M	F	M	F
Merchants	3654	10	2985	07
Shopkeepers& other tradesmen	4408	257	2500	30
Salesmen	403	-	842	02
Mercantile clerks	196	-	213	-
Gem dealers	802	-	64	-
Jewellers	302	01	83	-
Textile trade	2172	14	777	-
Rice, paddy & gram sellers	1084	179	906	11
Coconut, vegetable, betel, arecanut	782	41	703	11
Fish & meat sellers	455	07	238	01
Bread & rice cake sellers	525	574	620	133
Milk product & poultry	203	06	219	04
Cattle traders	485	03	136	-
Timber & Mattel traders	114	-	29	-
Bankers, moneylenders, commission agents & brokers	82	02	46	-
Furniture & building materials	248	02	85	

Since, both these groups were competitors in trade and commerce especially in the large scale mercantile enterprises as shown in the above table, understandably the Ceylon Moors had a hostile attitude towards the Coast Moors, although they follow the same religion. When the Ceylon Citizenship Bill - 1948 was debated in the Senate, Razik Fareed, a prominent Muslim political leader, and a member of the mercantile class of the Ceylon Moors made some remarks against the Coast Moors which overtly expressed his hostility towards them. He said that:

> "We, the Ceylon Moors, have suffered most in the past for want of a Citizenship Bill. Certain people, who call themselves Muslims, have done a great deal of injustice to Ceylon Moors

We the Moors have been treated very badly by certain people under the guise of the Muslim brotherhood. ... We have very unfortunately, played ourselves into the hands of other people. I can just quote, as an example, what has taken place, in Main Street, Pettah, where Ceylon Moors held sway some 40 or 50 years ago. If the legislation that it is sought to introduce by this Bill was in existence at that time, today the Ceylon Moors will be owning, as we did then, not only the whole of the Pettah but even the part of the Fort ...Any one in this chamber who opposes this Bill is really a traitor to the citizens of Lanka"[29]

He specifically refers here to the Coast Moors without naming them, which shows the contempt of the trading class of the Ceylon Moors towards the Coast Moors. He wanted to get rid of this competing group denying their citizenship right.

The influential section of the Coast Moors, although small in number, was assertive of its civic rights.[30] The Coast Moors built their own mosques in some places, and also were able to secure a representative in the legislative council. S. R. Mohamed Sultan represented the Indian Muslims in the legislature for the period 1924-1927. The Sri Lankan Muslims were heavily influenced by the South Indian Muslims in their religious customs and rituals. Even for theological training they depended on South Indian Muslims until the dawn of the independence.

After the independence the free flow of the South Indian Muslims was ultimately stopped. The citizenship Act of 1948 and the Sirima-Shastri Pact of 1964 compelled them to leave the country. Most of them went back to India after selling or transferring their properties to the local Muslims and others were gradually assimilated into the Sri Lankan Muslim community. The Coast Moors, an influential and controversial immigrant community, who made their presence strongly felt in the socio-political life of this country for several decades, silently vanished or submerged leaving their imprint as a past history.

Sri Lankan Muslims /Ceylon Moors

The term Sri Lankan Muslims specifically refers to a particular ethnic group, which was previously known as Ceylon Moors or Sri Lankan Moors which excludes all the other Muslim minority ethnic groups, Memons, Borahs, Malays and Coast Moors or Indian Muslims, although they follow the same religion, Islam. The phrase Muslim in Sri Lanka or Muslims of Sri Lanka is inclusive and refers to all the Muslim communities in this Country. However, the term Sri Lankan Muslims, with an adjectival is exclusive and only refers to the majority Muslim community in the current political discourse in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Muslims are the largest and dominant Muslim community in the country. The elite of this community from the late 19th century claims a pure Arab origin to assert their separate identity, although they are of a mixed origin. They trace their history from the Arab traders who began to settle in several coastal cities in Sri Lanka from 7th century onwards. The Arabs had commercial contact with South India and Sri Lanka even before the advent of Islam in Arabia. When Ibn Batuta visited Sri Lanka in the 14th century, several Muslim settlements were found in various coastal towns and even in the central parts of the country.[31] Before the arrival of the Europeans at the beginning of the 16th century, the Muslim community in Sri Lanka was economically powerful and dominating the trade in the region.[32] From the early 16th century to the late 18th century, under the Portuguese and Dutch, who were the bitter competitors with the Muslims in trade, the Muslims lost their economic and social power and retreated from their coastal strongholds into the interior villages and settled in thinly scattered fashion in the Kandyan kingdom, and were assimilated into the Kandyan social system while maintaining their religious and cultural identity.[33] From the early 19th century, under the British, who introduced the mercantile capitalist system and the communal politics in this country, the Muslims had to compete with the Sinhalese and Tamils, the majority ethnic groups and also with the other migrant minority Muslim groups for their survival, in a rapidly modernizing socio-political environment, maintaining their traditional religious beliefs and social practices.

Population Distribution of Sri Lankan Muslims

Sri Lankan Muslims constitute 7.12% of the total population of the country. The total population figure in 1981 was 1,056,972. They are a non territorial minority distributed in thinly scattered fashion all over Sri Lanka, except in the South Eastern part of the country where the Muslim concentration is high. The following table based on 1981 Census shows their geographical distribution.[34]

Nearly one third, that is more than 30% of the Sri Lankan Muslim population is distributed in the Tamil speaking Eastern and Northern Provinces. Muslims were living in the North until they were forcibly evicted in 1990 by the LTTE. More than seventy thousand Northern Muslims are now living in Puttalam, Anuradhapura and some other places as refugees for the last sixteen years. The highest concentration of the Muslims is in the Eastern Province. Within the East, they are highly concentrated in the Ampara district of the South Eastern part. They are numerically, economically and politically dominant in that District. They are also considerably concentrated in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts.

More than 100,000 Muslims live only in three districts; 80,000 to 50,000 only in four districts; 50,000 to 40,000 only in two districts; 40,000 to 25,000 in five districts; 25,000 to 10,000 in five districts and below 10,000 in four districts.

Urban and rural distribution of the Muslim population is significant in comparison with the other communities. Percentage wise, more Muslims live in the urban areas than the other communities. A large number of Muslims, nearly 43% of them, live in urban areas. In the Colombo District 99% of them live in Municipal areas, mostly in crowded slums. In Kalutara and Galle the urban Muslim population is 72%. In Matara and Hambantota it is 48%

Province	Total	Districts	Total	%
Eastern	315,201	Ampara	161,481	41.50
		Batticaloa	79,317	24.00
		Trincomalle	74,403	29.00
Western	240,774	Colombo	140,461	8.30
		Kalutara	61,706	7.50
		Gampaha	38,607	3.00
Central	152,556	Kandy	112,052	10.00
		Matale	25,836	7.23
		Nuwara Eliya	14,668	2.81
North West	109,301	Kurunegala	61,342	5.05
		Puttalam	47,959	10.00
North Central	58,924	Anuradhapura	41,833	7.10
		Polonnaruva	17,093	6.50
North	52,638	Mannar	28,464	26.62
		Jaffna	13,757	1.66
		Vavuniya	6,640	7.00
		Mullaithivu	3,777	5.00
Subragamuva	48,363	Kegalle	34,832	5.10
		Ratnapura	13,531	1.70
Southern	47,085	Galle	25,896	3.20
		Matara	16,457	2.60
		Hamnantota	4,732	1.12
Uva	32,130	Badulla	26.808	4.20
		Monaragala	5,322	2.00

and 55% respectively. In the Trincomalee, Ratnapura, Gampaha, Batticaloa and Puttalam Districts it is above 40%. In Matale and Kegalle the urban population is above 30% and in Kandy, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya the urban population is around 20%.[35]

Nearly 57% of the Muslims live in rural areas. Ampara District which has the largest Muslim concentration in the country is mostly an agricultural area and 82% of the Muslims live in the villages. More than 90% of the Muslims in Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Polannaruwa and Monaragala live in rural areas. In all three districts of the Central province nearly 70 to 80 percent of the Muslims live almost in isolated villages and nearly 60% of the Muslims in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts of the eastern province are rural.[36]

Cultural Diversity

It is widely believed that, the Sri Lankan Muslims are a homogeneous community. Although we can see a visible homogenizing tendency among Sri Lankan Muslims owing to the development of ethnic consciousness and religious fundamentalism, in reality, the Muslims too are a heterogeneous community as the Sinhalese and Tamils in this Country.

The pattern of population distribution of the Sri Lankan Muslims is the major determining factor of the diversity of their culture, economy and their political behaviour.

The Muslims who are predominantly distributed in a scattered fashion in the Sinhala speaking areas in the South are mostly bilingual, speaking Tamil and Sinhala. However, their mother tongue or home language is Tamil and only a few upper or middle class Muslims tend to use Sinhala or English as their home language. The northern and eastern Muslims are mostly monolingual and speak only Tamil as their mother tongue. The linguistic attitudes and language loyalty of Muslims differ according to this socio-linguistic situation. Both these groups also speak different dialects of Tamil. This aspect is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Southern and Eastern Muslims also differ in various cultural aspects. The Eastern Muslims, especially those who live in Ampara and Batticaloa districts, follow a matrilineal and matrilocal family system. That is they are divided into different *kudies,* or clans. A *kudi* is a group of families, all supposed to be originally descended from one family. They don't marry within the clan, and the children belong to the mother's clan. The bridegroom has to stay at the bride's residence. He does not take her to his residence. The kudi system is not found in the South. The Southern Muslims mostly follow a patrilocal system where the bridegroom takes the bride to his residence. However, McGilvry (1988:444) has stated that on his trip to Colombo and Galle in 1993 he found matrilocal residence in almost all of the middle-class Moorish families he visited.[37] He also cites de Munck (1993), Yalman (1967), Bawa (1888) and Raheem (1975) for reports on matrilocal residence among the Muslims in the South. However, in the Central Province matrilocal residence is very rare. My informants in the Kalutara District say the matrilocal residence is not common there but in the Southern Province, although both systems are prevalent, matrilocal residence is dominant. In the Eastern Province the matrilocal residence is so rigid and for a girl without a house it is very difficult to get married. These two systems mostly correspond with the local Tamil and Sinhalese systems, respectively. The North-Eastern and Southern Muslims also differ significantly in their folk culture, customs and rituals.

The major traditional economic activities of the Eastern and Northern Muslims are paddy cultivation and fishing, while the Southern Muslims engage in trade and commerce and to a less extent in public and government enterprises. Professional, technical and other employment in the government and private sectors is relatively low among the Muslims both in the South and East.

The political behavior of Southern Muslims as a thinly scattered non-territorial minority has always been dependent on the majority political parties. Since the Muslim votes are a deciding factor in many of the electorates in the South, the major political parties too try to keep the Muslim political leadership on their side. However, after 1980 the Eastern Muslims were able to mobilize themselves to form a Muslim political party, The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, that became a deciding force in national politics due to the proportional representation system and also to stake out a claim for island-wide Muslim political leadership. They made a visible impact on national politics with repercussive implications for the entire Muslim population of the country. The growing anti-Muslim sentiment among the Sinhalese in the South was one of the results of this political change, although, there are more important socio-economic factors that contributed to such anti-Muslim sentiment.

Although there is a visible diversity in culture, economy and politics of the Sri Lankan Muslims, their religion, Islam has been a strong unifying factor of the community as a whole to a certain degree. Owing to the various socio-historical conditions, Islam has been used as a symbol of ethnic identity and a unifying force of the community. However, in the process of identity formation in terms of Islam, we see the emergence of Islamization or fundamentalism which itself contains visible ideological diversity that divides the community into opposing religious groups or sects.[38]

Labels of Identity: From Moors and Mohammedans to Muslims

The 'Moor' identity was imposed upon the Muslim community by the colonial rulers, first by the Portuguese and then by the Dutch and the British. The word 'Moor' is supposed to be of Phoenician origin and was borrowed by Europeans to denote the Muslims of mixed Arab origin found in Western Spain and in North Africa. The Encyclopedia of Islam gives further information of the use of the word Moor and it is given below:

"Moors, a rather vague name still applied in the 19th century to certain elements in the Muslim town population of various countries and especially to the inhabitants of the Mediterranean ports of North Africa.

The word, presumably of Phoenician origin, corresponds to the ancient local name of the natives of Barbary reproduced by the Romans and Greeks.

The term *Mauri* used by the Romans in a general way for the Berbers passed into Spain in the form Moro, and it was by the name of Moros that the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula throughout the whole period of Muslim rule knew the Arab conquerors and Arabicised Berbers who had come to settle in Spain from the other side of the Strait of the Gibraltar. The name *Moros* passed into various European languages: French *Maures*, English *Moors*, German *Mauren*.

In modern times the Moors to the European were therefore the urban population of the North African ports, irrespective of the proportion of immigrants from Spain. Since then the word has been generally used with the meaning Muslims of the towns of the western end of the Mediterranean.

The name *Moors* has also been given to the Arab or Berber peoples, pure or mixed with negro blood, who live to the North in the Senegal in the province to which the French now give the ancient name of Mauritania and to the offspring of the marriages of Arabs from South Arabia and Cingalese who form an important Muslim colony in Ceylon."[39]

The Portuguese who first arrived in Sri Lanka used the word 'Moors' to refer to the Muslim community of mixed origin, whom they found living in the coastal cities. The Dutch also used the same word to refer to the Muslims. During the British period, the word gained currency and was widely used in colonial administration and in other domains. A section of the Colombo based Muslim elite adopted this word and persistently used it to refer to the Muslim community to serve its own class interest during the colonial period and also after independence, in order to differentiate themselves from the Indian Muslims and Malays.

It was this elitist group who formed the Moors Union in 1900 in the process of consolidating their ethnic identity. I. L. M. Abdul Azeez was the founder president of the Union. Later in the early 1920s they established the All Ceylon Moors' Association and in the early 1940s Moors' Islamic Cultural Home to promote the Moor identity.

However, there was another group of Muslims who did not want the Moorish identity. Instead they preferred an all inclusive Muslim identity and formed an organization called All Ceylon Muslim League, which was earlier known as Young Muslim League. They wanted to refer to themselves as Muslims and not as Moors. The Malays and the Coast Moors were able to align under this Muslim Identity label. Understandably T. B. Jayah, a prominent Muslim leader from the minority Malay community "realized the divisive nature of this term Moor and pleaded for the all inclusive religious identity (that is) Muslim,"[40] because he himself suffered by the exclusive identity politics of the Moors. When Jayah contested the State Council from Colombo Central, the Moors' Association supported A.E. Gunasinghe in opposition to Jayah, and while the All Ceylon Muslim League recommended Jayah for nomination to the State Council, the Moors' Association recommended Razik Fareed who was a strong advocate of Moor identity.[41] The rivalry between the Muslim League and the Moors' Association seems to have stemmed from the family rivalry of two " west coast gem-trading dynasties" of O.L. Mohamed Macan Markar (1877-1952) and N.D.H. Abdul Gaffoor (1879-1948). "Leaders of these two wealthy families also vied jealously for British knighthoods, litigated over control of the Colombo Maradana mosque, and cultivated rival Sufi brotherhoods, with Macan Markar heading the Sri Lankan Shazuliya order and Abdul Gaffoor leading the Qadiriyya order."[42] According to Thowfeeq who wrote a biography of Dr. M.C.M. Kaleel, the leader of the Muslim League, "the All Ceylon Muslim League, which was powerfully active and had opened up branches in Muslim areas in the island had recommended that Mr. N.D.H.

Abdul Gaffoor be conferred a knighthood ... proctor S.M. Ismail, who was adviser to Mr. Macan Markar then started ... the All-Ceylon Moors' Association in opposition to the All-Ceylon Muslim League, because Macan Markar was annoyed that the Muslim League had recommended N.D.H. Abdul Gaffoor" and "they worked very hard, spent much money, and established branches all over the island in rivalry to the All- Ceylon Muslim League. One of the chief aims of the All Ceylon Moors Association was to see Macan Markar was conferred a knighthood."[43] Whatever the immediate reason for establishing the All Ceylon Moors' Association, which was an off-shoot of the earlier Moors Union, it was clearly a sign of the conflict between the elitist groups for "political power, economic benefits and social status"[44]

The conflict is also evident in the Colombo Maradana Mosque management issue in the early 1920s. A section of the Moor elite wanted the management of the mosque in their hand and to exclude the Coast Moors and the Malays from it and they also wanted to legalize it. N.H.M. Abdul Cader, the Muslim member of the legislative council and the younger brother of N.D.H. Abdul Gaffoor, submitted a Bill on 24th January 1924 to enact an Act to be called Maradana Mosque Incorporation Ordinance. He was the trustee of the Maradana mosque and the manager of the Zahira College at that time.

According to his estimation the total value of the property of the Mosque at that time was about a million rupees. His rationale for the Ordinance was stated as follows: "Certain legal difficulties have arisen as to the vesting the properties in the trustee and questions have been raised on behalf of the tenants and lessees of the properties belonging to the mosque. One of these questions is whether a new trustee who has succeeded an old trustee can be sued."[45] He sought the Ordinance to clear these doubts. However, the motivation seems more than that. One was to exclude the membership to any Coast Moor or Malay Muslim to the Board of Trustees and another more important one was to regain some of the mosque property from

Wappuchi Marikar, one of the founders and the manager of the Colombo Zahira College which was run by the mosque committee, who transferred it to his own name as the manager of the institution because the Board had not been incorporated. If the property was not retransferred to the mosque it would fall into the hands of W.M. Abdul Rahman, the son of Wappuchi Marikar and a long time member of the legislative council from 1900 to 1916. The main opposition to the Bill, as stated by N. H. M. Abdul Cader at the legislature, came from W.M. Abdul Rahman and also from the Malays and Coast Moors.[46] According to T. V. Wright and T. L. Villiers, the unofficial European members of the legislature, several Moors and Malays approached every unofficial member of the legislature and expressed their strong objection to the Bill being passed. As Mr. Thambimuttu the Eastern Province member stated, it was a controversial matter of the sort the Council had never seen before. The controversy arose overtly because of one clause and it said that "The right of managing the affairs appertaining to the said mosque shall be exercised by the Ceylon Moors (Sonagar) professing the Muhammadan religion who are permanent residents of Colombo, and who have their religious ceremonies performed by the Khatib or Khatibs (priests) of the said mosque."[47] Abdul Cader argued that the said mosque belonged to the Moors of Colombo, not to the Muhammadan at large and he brought the title deeds and survey plan to the legislature to prove it. Specifically it was the problem of ownership and Abdul Cader stated that according to clause 1(a) all persons professing the Muhammadan religion (Islam) shall have the right of worshipping at the Maradana mosque, but the exclusive right is possessed by the members of the congregation only.[48]

It was suggested by the Attorney General and the Governor to delete the words Ceylon Moors (Sonagar) from the Bill, which gives exclusive rights for a section of the community, and there were interesting arguments in the Council for and against the deletion of the words. Abdul Cader's stand was that if the words were deleted it will lead to others to come in and claim the right of the management

of the mosque. He stated that the Malays had three mosques in Colombo managed by them and Coast Moors had their own mosque managed by them and he also expressed his fear that "there are a large number of Indian Moors in this city. Their number is, I think, equal to that of the Ceylon Moors. They are a floating population. If these words are deleted they would claim the right to become members. What will be the position of the local Moors then?"[49] Abdul Cader readily accepted all the amendments except the deletion of the words Ceylon Moors and finally he was able to pass the Bill with the support of many of the unofficial members including Ponnambalam Ramanathan who argued for him.

The Moor-Muslim controversy continued for decades within the Muslim elite. As Dennis McGilvray has pointed out, "at one point in 1945 the leaders of the Muslim League threatened to pronounce a *fatwa* expelling anyone who calls himself a 'Moor' from the Muslim Faith."[50]

In the 1940s and even in the '50s, Sir Razik Fareed was the leading proponent of the Moor identity. He was the long time chairman of All Ceylon Moors' Association and he was the founder of the Moors' Islamic Cultural Home in 1942. When D.S. Senanayake , the first prime minister in 1949 proposed to replace the term 'Moor' with 'Muslim in the electoral register, Razik Fareed opposed it as a threat to their racial identity[51] and "brought a resolution before the UNP conference suggesting the substitution of "Ceylon Moor" in place of "Ceylon Muslim" in Government correspondence."[52] It was also argued in the late '40s that if the Moorish identity was not established and only the Muslim identity was there, the Sri Lankan Muslims might have lost their citizenship and Razik Fareed is praised by his biographer for his prophetic action of promoting that Moor identity.[53]

A.M.A. Azeez, a strong proponent of the Muslim identity argued against the protagonist of the Moor identity in 1949, when he spoke as the chairman of the inauguration of the Ceylonese Muslim Union. About five hundred representatives from all parts of the Island participated at the inauguration. The Union seems to have been formed mainly to unite the Muslims under inclusive religious identity as against Razik Fareed's move to promote the Moor identity in the late 1940s. His main arguments are given below.

"We may declare in unequivocal terms our determined opposition to any innovation in the appellation, name or description of our community and in order that we may inaugurate a union for fostering of the brotherhood that in a singular manner characterizes Islam, our religion....let it be made clear that the proposal of the innovators does definitely entail the dethronement of Islam in our community, and the substitution in its place of a racial concept....We cannot allow an important public question of this nature to be dominated by either personalities or private friendships. To us the person who exploits Moorish sentiments for his personal gain is to be condemned equally as the person who exploits Muslim solidarity for a similar purpose....We are told by the protagonist that if we do not call our community by the name of Ceylon Moors we shall lose the rights and privileges attaching to Ceylon Citizenship and that our loyalty to Ceylon will be in doubt....I have never come across a more misleading appeal in my life..Where has the Government told the advocates of the Moorish creed that citizenship rights be taken away from us if we call ourselves Ceylon Muslims, a term that has been in use for the past several years from the time of British occupation and even earlier, a term that has been recognized and used by both the Donoughmore Commissioners as well as the Soulbury Commissioners. The Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948 lays down clearly the qualifications necessary for a person to become entitled to the status of a citizen of Ceylon....Nowhere in that Act is any special place or status given to any race, religion or community. This kind of propaganda shows us clearly how the educational

backwardness of our community can be exploited. We lose nothing by calling ourselves Ceylon Muslims instead of Ceylon Moors; on the other hand we gain appreciably by refusing to permit the dethronement of religion and the introduction of racialism in our community."[54]

After independence, the Muslims gradually dropped the word Moor. It was used only by the non-Muslims and a section of the English-educated Muslim elite, before and after independence. That is also only when they write in English. But when they write in Tamil they used the Tamil term *Conakar* as a substitute for Muslim. To my knowledge, the common Muslim folk never used this word to refer to themselves. Now the term exists only in some official documents, already established institutions like All Ceylon Moors' Islamic Cultural Home, street name – Old/New Moor Street and in academic writings on Sri Lankan Muslims.[55]

The term Mohammedan was used by the British in their official and legal documents for more than a century to identify the Muslims. However the word itself was spelled in different ways as Muhammadan, Muhammaden, Muhammedan, Mohammedan and so on. The problem of naming was also pointed out by P. Ramanathan even in 1885 when he spoke on the Mohammedan Marriage and Registration Ordinance in the legislative council. In the 1920s, there was awareness among the Muslims regarding the use of the word Mohammedan and also the word Moor as we discussed earlier. The Government appointed a committee in 1924 comprising M.T. Akbar, the Solicitor General as the Chair man and N.H.M. Abdul Cader, H.M. Macan Makar, T.B. Jayah and S.R. Mohamed Sultan the Muslim members of the legislative council, as the members of the Committee to consider and report upon the variations now in use in the spelling of the word "Mohammedan." The committee submitted a brief report as follows.

The Committee are unanimously of opinion that the word "Mohammedan" in whatever form it may be spelt, is incorrect, and should not be used. The correct expressions which should be used are "Muslim" to designate a person professing the religion preached by the Prophet, and "Islam" when a reference is made to the religion itself. These are the two expressions used in the Quran."[56]

When the Government amended the Mohammedan code of 1806 in 1929, the name of the ordinance was changed to Muslim Marriage and Divorce ordinance, and the terms Moor or Mohammedan which were used in the earlier Code were replaced by the phrase adherents of Islamic Faith, according to this recommendation.[57]

At the beginning the terms Moor and Mohammedan were used by the outsiders, the Europeans first, to refer to the Muslims and these terms can be considered as outside labels. For the European, the terms Mohammedanism and Mohammedan, and Islam and Muslim are synonymous. For them Mohammedanism is parallel with Christianity and Buddhism and Mohammedan is parallel with the Christian and the Buddhist which go with the names of the founders of the respective religion. But the term Islam and Muslim, originally used in the Qur'an, exclude the name of the founder of the religion. From the inception of Islam, the Muslims use these words to refer to the religion and the adherents of the religion. The terms Mohammedan and Moors were not known to the Muslims earlier, before the arrival of the European. However, the Muslim elite borrowed these terms to refer to themselves because of the impact of colonialism on them.

Those Muslim elite who preferred the term Moors as their label of identity, also used a parallel Tamil term *conakar*, another outside label mainly used by Tamils in Tamilnadu to refer to the Arabs and the Muslims. The term *conakar* is a derivation of *yavanar* borrowed from Sanskrit or Pirakrit, which is found in classical Tamil literature, belongs to the first three centuries of the Christian era. The word *yavanar* first referred to the Greeks and Romans and then all the other foreigners including the Arabs as in the case of Sanskrit. However, after the 3rd century A.D. when the trading

contacts between Tamils and Greeks and Romans ceased, the word referred only to the Arabs whose contact with the Tamils continued. Their settlements were referred to as *yavanac ceri* and *yavanap paadi* in the early Tamil literary works.

From the 11th century the word *conakar* is found in several inscriptions of Cholas and Pandiyas in Tamilnadu and also in literary texts and commentaries. Nachchinarkiniyar, the 14th century commenterian, in his commentary on some classical literary works interprets the word *yavanar* as *conakar*. That means the word *conakar* was more popular in his time. Nannul, a 14th century Tamil grammar mentions eighteen non-Tamil speaking countries from where words were borrowed into Tamil and according to a verse related to this, *conakam* was one of the countries, that may have referred to Arabia, Persia and Turkey, from where several words came into Tamil through the Arab traders. In Chola inscriptions there are references on *conaka cidukku* (female ornament) and *conaka vari* (tax on Chonakar). According to Robert Caldwell *Kayal Paddanam* was earlier known as *Conakar Paddanam*.[58]

It is clear from available evidence that the word *conakar* was used in Tamilnadu to refer to the Arabs and the Muslims and it is obviously an outsider's label to denote an alien community settled among them. In Sri Lanka too Tamils used the word *conakar* to refer to Muslims. However, a section of the Muslims in Sri Lanka borrowed this word and used it as an insider's label to refer to their ethnic identity in order to exclude the other Muslim group especially the Coast Moors and the Malays, although the Coast Moors could have authentically claimed that it was they who were originally referred to as *conakar* in their homeland, Tamilnadu.

Apart from the outside labels of Moor, Mohammedan, and conakar there are some more labels used by the Sinhalese and Tamils to identify the Muslims. *Marakkalaminissu, Marakkalaya, Thambila,* and *Hambaya* or *Hambankaraya* are the terms used by the Sinhalese. Among these terms *Marakkalaminissu* is a neutral term and *Marakkalaya* has a derogatory connotation and *Thambila* is abusive.

Hambaya was used to identify the Indian Muslims and this term too had a derogatory connotation. Apart from the word *conakar* which is a neutral term, the Tamils use *coni* (derived from *conakar*) as an abusive term to refer to a Muslim and they also use *Kakkaa, Kakkaamaar* or *Conikkaakkaa* as abusive terms especially to refer to Eastern Muslims. They also seldom use *mukkaal*, a sexually abusive term, which literally means three quarters that idiomatically refers to the circumcised male organ.

End Notes and References

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3. Hussainmiya, B.A., (1987) pp.31-32.
4. Ibid., p.41.
5. Ibid., p.47.
6. Ibid., p. 52.
7. Ibid., p.53.
8. For more detail on Sri Lankan Malay See, Bichsel-Stettler, (1989), Hussainmiya, (1987a), Kekulawala (1979), and Saldin, (1996).
9. Saldin, (1996) p.53.
10. Hussainmiya, (1987) p.16.
11. Ibid., p.19.
12. Ibid.,p.21.
13. Saldin, (1996), pp.42-46.
14. Osman and Sourjah, (2005), p.55.
15. Saldin, (1996), p. 47.
16. Ibid., p.50.
17. Ibid.,p.50.
18. Ibid.,p.53.
19. Osman and Sourjah,(2005), p.58.
20. Ibid, p.59.
21. Ramanathan, P. (1888), pp 8, 27.
22. Azeez, I. L. M.A., (1907), p.21.
23. Ibid., p.22.
24. For further details of imaginative constructions of Coast Moors, see chapter-4.
25. Ramanathan, P.(1888), p.1.

26. Azeez, I.L.M.A. (1907),p.3.
27. Ibid.,p.22.
28. Ibid.,p.21. Azeez prefers the label Lebbes to separately identify the Coast Moors and he conveniently forgets that the names Lebbe and Maraikkar were very common among the Ceylon Moors too which shows a close affinity between the Coast and Ceylon Moors. Azeez's mentor Siddi Lebbe and Wapuchi Maraikkar are two prominent figures of Ceylon Moors.
29. Hansard of the Senate, 14th September 1948.
30. De Silva, K.M., (1981) p.382.
31. For early Muslim settlements in Sri Lanka see, Devaraja, (1994), Shukri, Ed., (1986) and Mareena Azeez, (1986)
32. Devaraja, L. (1994), p.48.
33. Ibid., pp. 55-139.
34. The 1981 Census is taken here because there was no Census for 1991; the 2001 Census excluded some of the LTTE controlled areas and there were hundreds of thousands of people displaced internally and externally and the Muslims of the North were expelled by the LTTE in 1990.
35. Marga, (1988), pp.80-84.
36. Ibid.
37. McGilvry (1988), p.444.
38. See chapter-5 for discussion on Islamization.
39. The Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol.-iii, 1936, Leiden E. J Brill, London Luzac & Co. The entry writer seems to have mistakenly used the word Cingaleses (Sinhalese) here. The Sinhalese did not form a Muslim colony. It was the Arabs or the descendents of the Arab who formed a Muslim colony in Ceylon.
40. Ameer Ali, (2001) p.5.
41. Thowfeeq, (1986), pp.21-22.
42. McGilvray, (1988), p.452.
43. Thowfeeq, (1986), p.21.
44. Brass, Paul. (1991), p.25.
45. Hansard L.C.24.01.1924.
46. See for the details of allegations against W.M. Abdul Rahman by N.D.H. Abdul Cader, Hansard L.C.Vol.2. 1924
47. Hansard, L.C.24.07.1924, p.250
48. Ibid., p.251.
49. Ibid, p287.
50. McGilvray (1998), p.452.
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52. Azeez, A.M.A. (1949)
53. Zafar, (1983), pp.77-78.
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55. For more discussion on the Moor identity see: Qadri Ismail (1995)
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Chapter - 3

Language and Identity:
A Sociolinguistic Profile of
Sri Lankan Muslims

Language is closely related to the socio-cultural and political life of a community. It is not merely a medium of communication as defined by theoretical linguists. It becomes the symbol of national or ethnic or cultural identity of the community. It unites and also divides the people. It dominates and also assimilates them. It defines the socio-political boundaries and causes conflicts. People fight for language rights and die for it. They accept one language and reject another. There is no community without a language. Thus language plays a major role in human societies. It is part and parcel of social life.

The socio linguistic situation of Sri Lankan Muslims is peculiar. They reject linguistic identity and are confused of their mother tongue, but speak Tamil wherever they live, although in different dialects in different regions. There are monolinguals, bilinguals and trilingual among them. They value different languages differently. They argue for one or the other language as their mother tongue and they choose one or the other language as the medium of education of their children. Although they do not show any emotional attachment towards any language, they consider Arabic most important to them as it is the language of their religion despite the fact that a vast majority of them do not speak or understand Arabic and they seek their identity in religion but not in language. This chapter deals with these aspects of sociolinguistic behaviour of Sri Lankan Muslims.

The Question of Mother Tongue

Sri Lankan Muslims who emerged as a culturally conscious and a politically motivated minority community in modern Sri Lanka are not certain of their mother tongue. Although, a vast majority of them speak Tamil as their mother tongue, they do not show any emotional attachment towards it. This seems to be contradictory but the contradiction is their reality.

The term mother tongue is rather difficult to define in the contemporary world. The common understanding of mother tongue is that, it is the language children acquire from their homes and their own community environment from early childhood. However, it is difficult to say that the mother tongue is acquired from mothers, since it is not uncommon to see, mothers and their children speaking two different languages in the contemporary world. The Sri Lankan Diaspora is a good example. Children born to Jaffna Tamil parents who live in England, Germany, France or Denmark automatically acquire and speak English, German, French or Danish respectively but not Tamil, their mothers' tongue. It is also possible that the children of a Japanese woman married to a Tamil and living in Norway, speak neither Japanese nor Tamil but Norwegian. Because of these socio-linguistic complications the concept of mother tongue has lost its original meaning and the socio-linguists tend to use the term first language rather than mother tongue. However, the term mother tongue or native language is also widely used and still valid as far as the indigenous communities are concerned.

Sri Lankan Muslims who have at least a thousand years of continuous history in this country[1], speak Tamil not only in the North and East but also in the isolated villages surrounded by predominantly Sinhala speakers in the South. However, the Sri Lankan Muslim elite from the south have been more reluctant to accept Tamil as their mother tongue from the late 19th century obviously for political reasons. They wanted to assert their separate ethnic identity in order to differentiate themselves from the Sri Lankan Tamils whose mother tongue is also Tamil.[2] The Muslim

elite argued and maintained that Tamil was not their own language but a borrowed one.[3] Even in the late 1980s a reputed Sri Lankan Muslim scholar M. M. Uwais maintained that Tamil is the adopted language of Sri Lankan Muslims. According to Uwais "The Tamil language being the language of trade in the areas where the forefathers of the Muslim community settled, they had no difficulty in adopting Tamil as their language of communication with the resident population as well as among themselves and thereby lost interest in Arabic as the spoken language."[4] The same argument has been put forward by some others too.[5]

Since, most of the Muslim elite were uncertain and confused about their mother tongue or their own language, whatever it is, there was a continuous debate among them regarding the mother tongue and their language of education. At first, the Muslim, especially the Colombo based Muslim elite, wanted to disown Tamil as their mother tongue and to adopt Arabic or another language. They believe or pretended to believe that, Arabic is or should be their mother tongue since they traced their origin to the Arab traders, although, very few Sri Lankan Muslims could understand Arabic and no one uses Arabic in day to day communication.[6]

Siddi Lebbe (1838-1898), a leading figure in the Muslim revivalist movement in the late 19th century, wrote in 1884 in his news paper *Muslim Nesan* that "Muslims should try to adopt Arabic as their home language. If the Portuguese and Dutch who live in Ceylon can forget their mother tongue and speak English why can't we forget Tamil and make Arabic our mother tongue?"[7]

Siddi Lebbe ignored the fact that mother tongue is not a language that is chosen or learned, but it is naturally inherited or acquired. However, two years later Siddi Lebbe changed his mind and put forward a four language policy for the Muslims. He wrote in the same paper in 1886 that "it is important to us who live in this country, to learn Arabic, Tamil, English and Sinhala. In the first place, it is most important to learn Arabic since, our religion, our prayer, and Qur'an are in Arabic. Secondly Tamil; since, it is the

language we speak and one who does not know it would be like a blind, and he would need another person's help. Thirdly English; since it is the language of the rulers, to do any job this language is essential. Fourthly Sinhalese; knowing this language would be very useful since the majority of this country is Sinhalese."[8] Here too we can notice that he has given first place to Arabic because it is the language of the religion of the Muslims which is the primary marker of their ethnic identity.

Baddiuddin Mahmud (1904-1997) an emerging politician in the 1940s and '50s who would become a powerful Muslim political leader in the 1960s and '70s was propagating among the Southern Muslims as far back as from 1938 to learn Sinhala and adopt it as their mother tongue.[9]

The four language policy of Siddhi Lebbe for Muslims was later advocated by many of his followers especially, by A.M.A. Azeez (1911-1973), a reputed Sri Lankan Muslim intellectual who was born and received his primary and secondary education in Jaffna and served as a civil servant, Senator and Principal of Colombo Zahira College. He was very much respected by both Muslims and Tamils for his services. Unlike the other Muslim elite of the South, Azeez argued for Tamil as the mother tongue of the Sri Lankan Muslims. He wrote an article in 1941 on the subject entitled "The Ceylon Muslims and the Mother Tongue: Claims for the Tamil Language."[10]

He defines mother tongue as "the language in which the mother speaks to the child....the language in which the wife and husband address each other and both of them talk to their children", and he adds, "ordinarily there should be in a community no doubt as to what its mother tongue is. But in the case of the Ceylon Moors, confusion in some quarters has arisen as a result of many of the Moors being bilingual and some of them being dissatisfied with the present position and wanting to go after a new mother tongue....some are tempted to advocate Arabic as their future mother tongue and others Sinhalese and still others English. These advocates do not, however, come from the Northern or Eastern parts of Ceylon where

no doubt of any kind is entertained as regards to the future status of Tamil." He also says that "it is unfortunate that there should be some amount of doubt and confusion in a vital matter of this nature with which the cultural and educational future of this community is inextricably involved." And he goes on to say,

"To answer to the question, what is the mother tongue of the Ceylon Moors, should not be difficult. It is certainly Tamil. The Moors who occupy the Northern and Eastern parts of Ceylon speak no other language. If any of them know another language it is in addition to Tamil, and not in place of it. The Moors occupying the remaining portions of Ceylon speak both Tamil and Sinhalese, and a good number of the male members are equally fluent in both languages. But even in these parts no Ceylon Moor is found whether male or female, who cannot speak Tamil. And all of them use Tamil as their home language. Broadly speaking, the women in these parts are less fluent in Sinhalese than the men. This is a clear indication that Tamil is the mother tongue of the Moors."[11]

He was not supportive of the idea of switching over to another language. Finally he says that:

"No Ceylon Moors could possibly contemplate the division of his community into two sections, one continuing to have Tamil as the mother tongue and the other choosing a different language. Tamil should therefore continue to be the mother tongue of the Ceylon Moors, whether for its intrinsic value or on account of the extreme difficulty of adopting another. That Tamil already possesses a large amount of first-rate Muslim literature, thanks to the poets and writers of South India, and it is the language used in the 'kutbas' and 'hathees' of the local 'imams' and 'alims' are features in favour of Tamil."[12]

Azeez also argued against some of the English educated Muslim elite who wanted English to be their mother tongue. He said:

"For the Muslims to look upon English as their mother-tongue, merely because they have been given the option of having their children taught in English, is just a fiction, if not a myth. This myth is effectively exploded when we study the linguistic background of the Muslims of Ceylon. As far as I am aware, there is not a single Muslim family in Ceylon, where the home language is English. Several Muslim homes are of course bilingual but even among them, the language of ordinary intercourse is not English. Thus there in neither logic nor realism in the attitude of the Muslims, if they are determined to continue to exercise their option in favour of English."[13]

Azeez, a pragmatic and a realist, who hailed from the monolingual North, knew the difficulty of changing the mother tongue of the Northern and Eastern Muslims and he said:

"some tempted to advocate Arabic as the future mother tongue and others Sinhalese and still others English. These advocates do not, however, come from the Northern and Eastern parts of Ceylon where no doubt of any kind is entertained as regards the future status of Tamil. Even if it is accepted for argument's sake that the change in the mother tongue is indicated, the difficulties of the transformation are insuperable. A Dictator like Kemal Pasha could change the script but even he would have probably found it almost impossible to change the mother tongue."[14]

Whatever the opinions of the elite on the issue of the mother tongue of Sri Lankan Muslims, the vast majority of them speak Tamil as their mother tongue and use it for their in-group communication wherever they live.

However, the socio linguistic situation of Sri Lankan Muslims varies from place to place according to their population distribution and their class division. The Muslims who are distributed in a scattered fashion predominantly in the Sinhala speaking areas in the

south are mostly bilingual, speaking Tamil and Sinhala with equal fluency and most of them, especially the older generation invariably use Tamil as their home language and for their in-group communication.

A few upper class Muslims and a growing portion of the younger generation tend to use Sinhala or English as their home language. I interviewed a mother of an affluent family from Matale, in 2004 who sends her children to an English medium international school and I asked her in what language her children communicate with them at home. Her reply was English or Sinhala. I also asked her whether they speak Tamil with their parents at home and her reply was negative and she told me that they speak Tamil only with the servant girl who was a Tamil from the plantation and she commented that they speak good Tamil, not like the Tamil that Muslims speak. It implied her attitude towards the Tamil the Muslims speak and it was a kind of expression of self pity about their own speech. I also interviewed another Muslim lady who was an English teacher form Kadugannawa, a Sinhala dominated town in the Kandy District, her reply for my question whether they speak Tamil at home was also negative. There is a growing tendency among the school going generation who study in the Sinhala medium, to use Sinhala as their first language and speak in Sinhala even with their Muslim friends and parents. They do not read and write Tamil, that shows a shift in their mother tongue.

The Northern and Eastern Muslims are mostly monolinguals and speak only Tamil as their mother tongue. Few of them speak Sinhala or English besides Tamil to be bilingual or trilingual. But none of them use either Sinhala or English as their home language or for their in-group communication.

The linguistic attitudes and the language loyalty of the Muslims of the North-Eastern and Southern Provinces differ according to their sociolinguistic situation.

The Question of the Medium of Education: Switching over to Sinhala

The medium of education can be defined as the language through which one receives his/her whole education over a specific period. It is almost unanimously accepted by the educationists that one's mother tongue or the first language should be the language of education at least in the primary and secondary levels. However, there are many societies in the contemporary world that face some or other problem with regard to the medium of education.

There is a growing tendency among the Southern Muslims to switch over to Sinhala as the medium of instruction during the last few decades and it was also a controversy among the Muslims for a long time.

Sri Lankan societies faced problems of the language of education only when the British colonial rulers introduced the modern education system in this country. Until then the Sri Lankan communities including the Muslims received their traditional education through their mother tongues which remained intact even during the Portuguese and the Dutch rule.

The British introduced secular modern education in English in this country in the early 19th century. Christian missionaries opened English medium schools in the major cities throughout the country. The Sinhalese and the Tamils were largely absorbed into that system since English had become essential for the upward social mobility under the colonial rule.

However, the Muslims resisted modern education in the English medium for a long time. The reasons might be their misconception of English education, orthodoxy and the close links of English with Christian proselytization. They continued to follow their traditional system of religious education. This was the case till the end of the 19th century. According to an Education Department report, in 1893 there were 5910 Qur'an madarasas throughout the country and these were the centres of Muslim education.[15] According

to another report, in 1861 there were only 23 Muslim students among 672 total numbers of students who were studying in nine English schools across the country.[16] However, from the end of the 19th century the Muslim upper class showed an increasing interest in the modern English education.[17]

At the same time there was a voice emerging for vernacular education as was the case in India and some other countries under colonial rule. In the 1880s, S.W. Green, the Director of Education and Ponnambalam Arunachalam insisted that education should be in the vernacular languages instead of English. The debate on the importance of vernacular education continued in the Legislative Council and outside till the 1950s and commissions were also set up. As a result, in 1945, the vernacular was made the medium of education in all primary schools. However, the Muslims did not support this change. Ironically the Muslim elite, who first rejected English education, now insisted that English should continue as their medium of education as it was essential for their progress and the Muslim children were exempted. Most of the Muslim upper class parents "opted for English wherever such facilities were available and the wisdom of this decision very few questioned."[18] After the political change in 1956 the vernacular education came in to practice up to the university level. The Sinhalese and the Tamils accepted their mother tongue as their medium of education while a section of the Muslim elite did not want to accept this change and the Government made a provision in order to satisfy the Muslims to enable the parents to choose the medium of education for their children. The opportunity was mostly utilized by the Muslims than the other communities. However, from the late 1950s all the schools in this country gradually changed to vernacular education dropping English as the medium of instruction and the Muslim had to choose either Tamil or Sinhala as their language of education. After 1960 a large number of Southern Muslims were gradually motivated to choose Sinhala for several reasons.

Although, the Southern Muslim students had opted for the Sinhala medium before1940, the number was very few. During the last three or four decades it has been gradually increasing and it may further increase in the future. At present around 20 to 25% of the total Muslim students' population are in the Sinhala medium, either in the Sinhala schools in the South or in the Muslim schools that are conducting Sinhala medium classes.[19] Although, it is difficult to get the exact details of the Sinhala medium Muslim students, according to a data we collected in 2000 around 45,000 to 50,000 were studying in many of the Sinhala schools in the 19 districts of Southern provinces and also in 19 Muslim schools which are conducting Sinhala medium classes. For example in the two leading Muslim schools in Colombo, Muslim Ladies College and Zahira College a large number of Muslim students are studying in the Sinhala medium. More than 60% of the total student population is in the Sinhala medium in these two schools. According to the 2006 statistics for the Muslim Ladies College the higher percentage of the students are in the Sinhala medium. The details are given below. The highest percentage in the primary level shows the growing trend towards the Sinhala medium.

	Total	SM	TM	EM
	3128	60%	33%	7%
Primary (Year 1-5)	1240	68%	32%	—
Secondary (Year 6-11)	1519	55%	31%	14%
Higher Secondary (Year 12-13)	369	57%	41%	02%

The provincial and district level statistics show some significant differences. First let us look at the provincial statistics.

Province	Percentage
Western	50%
Southern	42%
Uva	27%
Central	15%
Sabaragamuwa	14%
North West	07%
North Central	02%
Eastern	0.32%
Northern	—

The above statistics show that Muslim students have chosen Sinhala medium to varying degrees. There is no data for the Northern Province from where the Muslims were expelled in 1990. The percentage in the Eastern, North Central and North Western Provinces is insignificant and in the other five provinces it is very significant. The district level statistics gives us some more information. The following 10 districts show significant percentage of Sinhala medium students.

Galle	60%
Colombo	50%
Hambantota	41%
Ratnapura	33%
Nuwara Elia	32%
Badulla	28%
Gampaha	27%
Kandy	15%
Kurunagala	12%
Kalutara	11%

According to the above statistics in 7 districts more than 25% of the Muslim students are in the Sinhala medium. Galle, Colombo and Hambantota show the highest percentage. This clearly shows a significant shift in the medium of instruction among the Southern Muslims.

What are the reasons for the vast number of the Muslims to choose Sinhala as their medium of education instead of Tamil, their first language? It is obvious that their sociolinguistic conditions determine their choice.

The Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka after independence were consistent of their medium of instruction and they have chosen their mother tongue for the purpose. They were not in a dilemma regarding their mother tongue at any point in their history. Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms that developed before and after the independence cultivated love and passion of language among them, while the Muslims were confused of their language.

The history of the Muslims was different. As the second largest minority they had to compete with both Tamil and Sinhala communities for their survival. Love and passion of language were not the basis for their socio political movements. Although, Tamil is their mother tongue, they rejected linguistic identity in favour of an ethnic identity based on their religion. The language attitude and the language maintenance of the Muslim community were determined by their socio political needs.

Muslims who live in the monolingual regions in the North and East invariably use Tamil for all of their communicative needs while the Muslims who live in the bilingual region of the South use either Tamil or Sinhala according to the social context. Thus the language behaviour of the Muslims differs according to their socio linguistic situation.

There is no choice in the medium of education in the monolingual region. Sinhala is the distant language for most of the people of this region. However, a small number of Muslim students have chosen Sinhala as their medium of instruction in the Trincomalee and Ampara districts. Non-existence of Tamil medium schools in their close vicinity is the main reason for this choice. Parental attitude can also be a reason. Some parents think that Sinhala medium education may give a better opportunity to their children.

As we have noted earlier, the Muslims who live in the bilingual South are increasingly choosing Sinhala as their medium of instruction. Sinhala is not a distant or an alien language to them. Most of them learn to speak Sinhala from their early childhood. They have been increasingly choosing Sinhala as their medium of instruction only during the last three or four decades. The sociological factors of this trend should be studied in detail. One of the important factors seems to be the tendency of assimilating with the dominant group. This is a common feature in bilingual communities. In a bilingual region the language of the dominant group is predominantly used by others for their social communication. In such a situation the minorities are gradually subjected to language shift. This is seen among the Muslims who are scattered in the Sinhala dominated regions.

Another factor seems to be related to the Sinhala dominance in the South. Since the Muslims are thinly scattered in the Sinhala dominated region, they could not have enough Tamil medium schools for themselves to cater the increasing demand for educational opportunities. As we noted earlier, around 70% of the total Muslim population in Sri Lanka is distributed in the Southern districts and only one third of them are in urban areas and others are scattered rurally. Because of this demographic pattern they are unable to get good schools with sufficient facilities. There are 439 Muslim schools in the Southern region and 60% of them are located in the five districts of Kurunagala, Kandy, Kegalle, Anuradhapura and Puttalam. Also of the 109 Grade 1 A, B, C schools, 54% are in these five districts. No sufficient school facilities exist in the other 12 districts of the region. There are 20 schools in Colombo, 14 in Galle and 7 in Hambantota with poor facilities. This is one of the reasons for the increasing number of Sinhala medium enrolment in these districts.

The shift in the medium of education had far-reaching consequences for the Sri Lankan Muslim community. It is tantamount to a shift in their first language. Kearney observed this trend 25 years ago[20]. As we have noted, the trend seems to be increasing now. At least a group of younger generation, boys and girls now use Sinhala as their home language and for their in-group communication. Nearly 45% of the Muslim students in Sinhala medium schools are girls. This indicates a possible change in their mother tongue in the future. Azeez anticipated it sixty years ago and warned the Muslim community not to choose Sinhala as the medium of education for their children. He predicted that if they choose to do so, in the future it would divide the community into two distinct linguistic groups.[21] His prediction has become a partial reality sixty years after his warning. If this tendency prevails for some time, one can foresee that it will happen within another fifty years.

The choice of Sinhala medium is not merely a natural preference for the Southern Muslims. As we have already noted, they could not maintain good and enough Tamil medium schools in their vicinity as they are thinly scattered minority in the South and the state is also reluctant to provide them sufficient material resources for their continued education in Tamil. Since education has become an essential tool for upward social mobility they are psychologically compelled to send their children to Sinhala medium schools for better education.

The Question of Language Loyalty

Southern and North-Eastern Muslims also differ in their language loyalties according to their sociolinguistic situations. Although, both the groups do not show any special emotional attachment towards the Tamil language as the Tamils show, the Southern Muslims feel rather inferior that the Tamil they speak is impure or bad while the Eastern Muslims are proud that their Tamil is good, and at times some feel even better than that of the Tamils. Even the ordinary Muslim folk of the Ampara and Batticaloa regions have produced a rich variety of folk songs compiled by Tamil scholars and admired widely among Tamils.[22]

The Southern Muslims give more importance to Sinhala, since it is the dominant language in their vicinity and it is very essential

for their inter-communal transactions. For the Eastern Muslims, Sinhala is a distant language as we have already noted and the ordinary village Muslims do not need Sinhala for their social interactions. They consider Tamil as their mother tongue and it is the only tool for their personal, socio-cultural and political communication. Only the government officials and professionals need to learn Sinhala for their official purposes.

This sociolinguistic situation determines their language loyalty. This is clearly reflected in their choice of the medium of instruction as we have noted in the previous section, and it was strongly reflected in the response to the official language issue in the 1950s.

The Sinhala only Official Language Bill was passed in the Parliament in June 1956 and it was a turning point in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. From the mid 1950s, Sri Lankan Tamils were politically mobilized against the Sinhala only official language policy of the major Sinhala political parties which had changed their earlier policy of Sinhala and Tamil as official languages, because of their parliamentary political opportunism. In the general election held in 1956 the official language policy was a major issue and the Tamil Federal Party swept to victory in the North and East with the help of the Muslims while the Southern Muslims were aligned with the UNP or MEP, both of them were contesting on the Sinhala only policy. When the Sinhala only Bill was debated in the parliament in June 1956 The Colombo based Southern Muslim political leadership supported it while the Northern and Eastern Muslims opposed it.

Razik Fareed (1893-1984), a long-lived Colombo based Muslim political leader, who was elected to the parliament from the Colombo Central, was an ardent supporter of the Sinhala only. He made a fairly lengthy speech on the subject in the parliament on 13th June 1956 with a strong anti-Tamil flavour and, in retaliation he was derogatorily addressed by Mr. Sundaralingam, MP for Vavuniya as *maula* and *Sinhala maula* (a convert, a Sinhala convert) a term that is considered as a great insult by many Muslims. Razik Freed began his speech stating that he was the happiest man present there because

he said "the dream I dreamt and the vision I saw 12 years ago are a reality today- that the Sinhalese language be the only official language of Sri Lanka." He was one among the five members and only one from the minorities who voted for a motion at the State Council in 1944 to make Sinhala as the only official language. He had nine reasons for his support for the 'Sinhala only' in 1956. He said in his speech:

"I support the Bill firstly, because I now feel more convinced than ever before that one language alone will serve us as a unifying factor of the different communities. One official language will be the emblem of ideal homogeneity of a nation and, very logically, it should be the language of the majority, the Sinhalese. Secondly, I support the Bill because I was returned on the election pledge to make the Sinhalese the official language; thirdly, I do so as a nominee of the All Ceylon Moors' Association and the member of the UNP which stand, in unequivocal terms for Sinhala only. Fourthly, the time and labour involved in maintaining records in the two languages would be an absolute wastage. Fifthly, any scheme except one language will not afford equal opportunities to all communities. Sixthly, it would be a burden to the educational system to have three compulsory languages, for English is always bound to be one of them. Seventhly, if the arguments against Sinhalese only being the only official language is that numerical superiority alone should be no consideration, then it is most unfair to ask parity of status for Sinhalese and Tamil only, because there should be parity for English, in respect of the Burghers and Englishmen; for Malay in respect of Malays; and Arabic in respect of the Moors. Eighthly, for the Moor child who has another language - Arabic - to study it might be considered too much of burden to study four languages. Ninthly, the last but not the least reason, I do not wish to be a party to the political genocide of my race, the Moor community, by another race, the Tamil community, which is stretching its

treacherous tentacles to draw us into the whirlpool called the Tamil-speaking nation and thus annihilating a race with the history culture and religion of its own."[23]

The rest of his speech was mostly an elaboration of his ninth point, how the 'Moors' suffered under Tamil domination from the late 19th century. A close reading of his speech reveals the detachment of the English educated Southern Muslim elite from the Tamil language and the long standing rivalry between the Muslim and the Tamil elitist groups. Razik Fareed did not consider the only language spoken by the monolingual North-East Muslims who form one third of the total Muslim population while he spoke about Arabic, a language spoken by none of the 'Moors' of this country. He did not even take into consideration the four language policy for Muslims put forward by Siddhi Lebbe and others. The last fifty years of the history after the Sinhala only Bill was enacted clearly proved that the Bill was the beginning of the breakup of Sri Lanka, contrary to the conviction of Razik Fareed that, 'the one language alone will serve us as a unifying factor of the different communities.'

Baddiuddin Mahmud was another Southern Muslim political leader who supported Sinhala only. He was not in parliament in 1956 and he did not contest the election. He was one of the founder members of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and served as a joint secretary and the deputy chairman of the party and he was also a long time friend of S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake and his family. He was deeply involved in the election campaign and worked for the landslide victory of the party. Although he did not accept the repeated request of Bandaranayake to be a member in his 1956 cabinet as a nominated member[24] he was in total agreement with his policy of the Sinhala only official language.

In fact, it is said that, Baddiuddin was the first Sri Lankan who wanted Sinhala as the only official language in the independent Sri Lanka. In 1938 he spoke about it in a meeting organized by Galle Muslims. He said in the meeting that "if the Muslims learn Sinhala, all the misunderstandings between the Muslims and the Sinhalese

will disappear and peace and goodwill will flourish. Muslims did not get any benefit by accepting Tamil language; on the contrary it has been an obstacle for their progress. Today or tomorrow, we will definitely get independence and Sinhala should be the official language."[25] In the 1950s he wrote several articles on this subject to the English and Sinhala newspapers insisting that Sinhala should be the only official language and the Muslims should learn that language and accept it as their mother tongue and the medium of instruction.[26] In December 1955 at the SLFP annual session held at Veyangoda Baddiuddin said that "85% of the Muslims want to have Sinhala as the only official language and Sinhala as their own language."[27] Baddiuddin too did not consider the situation of the North-Eastern monolingual Muslims.

One Muslim politician from the south who voted against the Bill was A.H. Macan Markar, elected from the Kalkuda electorate in the Eastern province mainly by the Muslim voters. He anticipated two extreme consequences if the implementation of the Bill was pursue to its logical ends that is "either the emergence of a homogeneous population speaking and understanding one language, namely the Sinhalese language; or the division of the country into two distinct nations, the Sinhalese nation and the Tamil nation, depending on the intensity of the love which the Tamil has for his own language as against the enormous sacrifice that he will be called upon to make in attaining the object of his love, that is the Tamil language."[28] The second of his prediction is the present reality.

Regarding the position of the Muslims about the Bill he was realistic. He said "there is among the Ceylon Moors diverse opinion on this question in this House and throughout the country. Those who are living in the Sinhalese areas are definitely for the Bill. Some of them are most enthusiastic. But my own view is that, in the final analysis, the choice for us between two masters one of whom is not so hard a task-master."[29] In conclusion he stated that "I would support this Bill for Sinhala only if sufficient provision were made to give due recognition to the reasonable use of the Tamil language in the

Northern and Eastern Provinces; but in the absence of provision for such recognition I cannot be a party to an injustice to the Tamil-speaking community who have made this island their home from time immemorial and who have in ample measure contributed towards the prosperity and political advancement of this country."[30] His voice was obviously exceptional for the Southern Muslim leaders.

M.E.H. Mohamed Ali (Muthur), M.M. Mustafa (Poththuvil) and M.S. Kariyappar (Kalmunai) were elected from the Eastern province by the Muslim and Tamil voters and the last two were Federal Party candidates and were obviously against the Bill. Mohamed Ali who was an independent candidate was also against the Bill and he spoke in Tamil in the House opposing the Bill. He said that if the Bill is implemented it would destroy the unity of the country and he faulted the Southern Muslim leaders who supported the Bill. He also said, "Tamil is the mother tongue of the Sri Lankan Muslims. They have written a large number of books in Tamil, the Qur'an has been translated into Tamil. Some leaders say that Arabic Tamil is the mother tongue of the Muslims; it is only written in Arabic, but it is Tamil. I proudly say that Tamil is the mother tongue of the Muslims."[31]

Mustafa also made a lengthy speech strongly and sensibly expressing his sentiments against the Bill. He said that "it seeks, when and if enacted into a law, to make the mother tongue of almost 20 lakhs of permanent nationals of this country almost forbidden and forgotten...it aims at the gradual but ultimate liquidation of the entire Tamil speaking people of this country." Further he said that "I am taking this stand on the language issue in all seriousness, not because I want to please my Tamil friends - far from that - not because I want to displease my Sinhalese friends but purely because I feel that the Tamil language is the mother tongue of the people I represent in parliament."[32]

Mustafa also strongly criticized the statement made by the Colombo based Muslim leaders on the language of the Muslims. He said:

"The decision arrived at by certain individuals of Muslim faith in Colombo in regard to the specific question of language cause much controversy among us. In fact it was sought to be said here by responsible people that, we the followers of the Muslim faith .... have no language of our own and that the only language that we talk and know is the language called 'Arabic Tamil.' Let me on the floor of this House, in all seriousness and with the full sense of responsibility, tell Hon. Members that my people, the people of the Batticaloa District, the Muslims of the Eastern province, are thoroughly ashamed that, a statement like that should have been made in this House. Let me tell Hon. Members that we in the Eastern province speak the purest form of Tamil. We speak Tamil which the Tamils themselves cannot speak."[33]

Mustafa spoke on behalf of the Muslims whose mother tongue is also Tamil, and to safe-guard their language rights. He further said:

"The Tamil language gives an insight to our culture and the gems that are hidden in its literature. I as a Muslim, have a further reason for supporting equality of status for the Tamil language. There is not a single book in the Sinhalese language which people of my community could read and understand. In fact as a proud member of the Islamic race, I wish to straightway say on the floor of this House that I will never be a party to my race being affected, being merged, submerged and ceasing to be recognized as a separate entity in the question of the language issue."[34]

In conclusion he said that "the Muslims of the Eastern province in particular are against this Bill not because they want to align themselves with the Tamils but because they honestly and sincerely feel that Tamil is their mother tongue....in choosing to vote against this Bill, I am really reflecting the wishes and desires of my community, my electorate and the part of this country from which I hail."[35]

Another strong voice raised against the Bill was from A.M.A. Azeez, a senator representing the UNP in the Senate. On 3rd July 1956 he made a fairly long speech in the Senate on the Sinhala only Bill. His stand on the Bill was contrary to the UNP's latest policy on the official language. He was mostly concerned about the fate of the Muslim community as a whole. He did not want to see a linguistically divided Muslim community instead he wanted to see an undivided Tamil speaking Sri Lankan Muslim community. That was his policy from the 1940s as we have noted earlier.

He said that:

"I am convinced that the present Government do not seem to be aware of the hardship they are causing to a community like the Muslim community by the introduction of the Sinhala language as the one official language of Ceylon in the manner in which it has been brought up by this Bill ...this Bill places grave disabilities on the Muslim community who are not Sinhalese speaking...and it is not correct to say that we are the least affected; I would say that we are the most affected. We have another peculiar difficulty because ours is a community scattered throughout the Island, with one third of its members inhabiting the purely Tamil- speaking areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces and with the other portion, namely the two thirds, inhabiting the seven provinces. Any language question introduces a new problem to us – how to preserve the solidarity of the community, how to ensure that the political power it possesses is not diminished."[36]

Azeez would have foreseen that the Sinhala only policy would definitely divide the Muslim community into two linguistic groups, and therefore, he wanted to have Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages. On 20th February 1954 at the annual session of the UNP he proposed the following resolution that "this Conference reiterates its decision to make Sinhala and Tamil the official languages throughout the country in the shortest possible time."[37] The phrase

"throughout the country" was very important to Azeez because Muslims live throughout the country. However, on the eve of the 1956 general election the UNP was also dragged into the Sinhala only race. Although the party was defeated in the election, they also decided to support the Sinhala only and asked the members of Parliament and the senators to vote for the bill. Azeez resented the decision and resigned from the party in June 1956, since the Sinhala only Bill was against his political and moral conviction.

The foregoing discussion on the diverse opinion of the Muslim elite clearly shows that, how the socio-linguistic diversity of Sri Lankan Muslims determines their language behavior, language attitude and loyalty.

Muslim Tamil Dialect

There is a confusion and controversy among the Sri Lankan Muslims over their language, spoken and written. As we have noted in the last section, some Muslims wanted to call it Arabic Tamil, suggesting it as a distinct language which is different from that of the Tamils' while some Muslims say it is the purest form of Tamil, better than the Tamil spoken by the Tamils themselves and Arabic Tamil is nothing but a written form of it.

In this section I would like to throw some light on the subject providing a brief socio linguistic description of the spoken dialect of Sri Lankan Muslims, identifying it as one of the distinct social dialects of Tamil and I also would like to show some linguistic evidences for the internal diversity of the Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil.

It is well known that Tamil is one of the diglossic languages of South Asia which has two distinct varieties namely literary and colloquial, the structures and functions of which vary to a great extent.[38] The literary variety is considered the high variety of the language and is exclusively used in formal situations and for writing with varying degrees of stylistic variations. The colloquial variety includes a large number of sub-varieties which are grouped in to several regional and social dialects.

Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil (SLMT) is recognized as a social dialect of Sri Lankan Tamil (SLT) which is one of the major regional dialects of Tamil.[39] These two varieties, SLMT and SLT significantly differ in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. Here, I would like to give only some lexical items to show the differences between these varieties. Let us take some kinship terms first:

SLT	SLMT	Relationship
appaa	vappaa	father
ammaa	ummaa	mother
annan	naanaa/kaakkaa	elder brother
tampi	tampi	younger brother
akkaa	daattaa/raattaa	elder sister
tankacci	tankacci	younger sister
makan	makan/mavan	son
makal	makal/ maval	daughter

It is interesting to note that out of eight terms of nuclear family relations four terms are different in SLT and SLMT. Similar differences are found in some terms of extended family relations too. Some examples are given below.

SLT	SLMT	Relationship
cittappaa	caaccaa	father's younger brother
cinnammaa	caacci	mother's younger sister
ammammaa	ummummaa	mother's mother
appammaa	vaappummaa	father's mother
maccaal	macci/mayni	cross cousin (female)

However, a number of terms of extended family relations are found common in SLT and SLMT. For example, periyppaa (father's elder brother), periyammaa (mother's elder sister), maamaa (maternal uncle), maami (paternal aunt), maccaan (cross cousin- male), marumakan (nephew), marumakal (niece), peeran (grand son), peetti (grand daughter) are common in both the dialects.

Some classical Tamil words have become part of the core religious vocabulary of the Muslims and are exclusively used in SLMT. For example the Tamil words tolu (pray) and tolukay (prayer) are exclusively used by the Muslims while the Tamils use the words kumpitu or vananku (pray). Although the semantic content of the sentences *naan tolap pooran* and *naan kumpitap pooran* (I am going to pray) is same as given in the English translation, in the specific sociolinguistic contexts they are mutually exclusive and indicate the speakers' different religio-cultural identities, that is the first speaker is a Muslim and the second speaker is a Tamil Hindu or a Christian. Another good example is the word *noompu* (fasting) a spoken variant of *noonpu*, the written form of the word which is also found in the classical Tamil literary texts. Now it is used only by the Muslims. The Hindu Tamils use the equivalent Sanskrit barrowings *viratam* or *upavaacam*.

There are some instances, where semantically related Arabic and Tamil words are used in different socio-cultural contexts in SLMT. Two examples are given below.

Arabic	Tamil	
mauttu	caavu	death
mayyattu	cavam	dead body (human)

The Arabic words are exclusively used to refer to the death and dead body of a Muslim while the Tamil words are used to refer to non Muslim's in SLMT. For example Kaleel, a Muslim name co-occurs only with *mauttu* and Kannan, a Tamil name co-occur only with *caavu* in SLMT. Hence, the sentences *Kaleel mauttaap poonaar* (Kaleel expired) and *Kannan cettup poonaar* (Kannan expired) are acceptable in SLMT, but not *Kaleel cettup poonaar* and *Kannan mauttaap poonaar*. These expressions are almost a social taboo.

Frequent use of hundreds of Arabic loan words in SLMT is an important aspect that differentiates it from SLT and it will be discussed in the next section.

Regional Variations in SLMT

SLMT also has significant regional variations. On a micro scale we find village level and district level variations. But at the macro level we can broadly divide SLMT into two major regional sub-dialects namely North-Eastern Muslim Tamil (NEMT) and Southern Muslim Tamil (SMT) which show significant differences in all the levels of linguistic structure and lexicon.[40]

NEMT includes the speech varieties of Northern and Eastern province Muslims. They have more common core than differences and the speakers can easily understand each other. SMT includes mainly the speech varieties of Southern, Western and Central province Muslims and they also have more common core. However, there are vast differences between SLMT and SMT and the degree of mutual intelligibility is gradually becoming low between them, if we go further down South.

One of the important differences on the phonological level between the two varieties is the frequent occurrence of voiced plosives / b, d, j, g / in the initial and medial positions of the words in SMT which is absent or rare occurrence in NEMT. The voiced phonemes are represented by voiceless / v, p, t, c, k / in NEMT. Few examples are given below:

SMT	NEMT	
/ bakiru /	/ vakiru /	stomach
/ bandi /	/ vanti /	tummy
/ boottal /	/ poottal /	bottle
/ deecikkaa /	/ teecikkaay /	lime
/ dotangaa /	/ tootankaay /	orange
/ goovaa /	/ koovaa /	cabbage
/ gavun /	/ kavun /	frock
/ jannal /	/ cannal /	window

Even the Arabic loan words mostly nativized in NEMT by the ordinary folks than in SMT. For examples:

SMT	NEMT	
/ haajiyaar /	/ aaciyaar /	The person who done the Haj
/ hajju /	/ acci /	The Haj
/ lebbe /	/ ilava – levva /	Priest

Another significant difference in the phonological system between SMT and NEMT is the loss of retroflection in SMT. It is preserved in NEMT like other Sri Lankan Tamil dialects. Thus / l and ḷ /; / n and ṇ / are phonemic in NEMT while the phonemic distinction between them is lost in SMT. For example mala (hill) and maḷa (rain); manam (mind) and maṇam (fragrance) are contrastive minimal pairs in NEMT, but this phonemic distinction is absent in SMT and they are phonetically realized as mala (hill/ rain) and manam (mind/ fragrance) in SMT.

Because of the loss of retroflection in SMT there is a phonetic difference in the vowel systems between SMT and NEMT. In NEMT as all other sub-dialects of SLT except the Hill country Tamil the high front vowels / i, ii, e and ee / are phonetically realized as high central vowels [ɨ, ɨɨ, ə and əə] before the retroflex consonants. This phonetic change does not occur in SMT. Few examples are given below:

	SMT	NEMT	
/ iṭam /	[iṭam]	[ɨḍam]	place
/ viiṭu /	[viiṭu]	[vɨɨḍu]	house
/ veḷḷa /	[vella]	[vəḷḷa]	white
/ keeḷu /	[keeḷu]	[kəəḷu]	ask

In the grammatical level too we find significant differences between SMT and NEMT. Few examples are given below:

1. The first and the second person singular pronouns *naan* (I) and *nii* (you) change their forms as *en* and *on* respectively to take the genitive case marker in NEMT, but they change as *een* and *oon* in SMT. For eample:

NEMT	SMT	
enṭa	eenda	mine
onṭa	oonda	yours

2. Finite verbs in NEMT and all the other dialects of Tamil take person, number and gender markers (PNG) obligatorily, but strictly not in SMT, at least in the down south region. It is like Malayalam and Sinhala in this respect. See the following examples:[41]

NEMT	SMT	
naan poonan	naan poona	I went
naanka poonam	naanka poona	We went
nii poonaay	nii poona	You (sig.) went
niinka pooniinka	niinka poona	You (pl.) went
avan poonaan	avan poona	He went
aval poonaal	aval poona	she went

In the above examples from NEMT poo- is the verb root, -n- is past tense marker and -an, -am, -aay, -iinka, -aan and -aal are PNG markers. In the SMT the verb root -poo and the past tense marker -n- are identical with NEMT, but the verbal ending -a is different. In the traditional Tamil grammar the verbal form poona- is treated as relative participle and the suffix -a as the relative participializer. However, for descriptive purpose it can be treated as finite verb ending in SMT.

3. The yes no question marker in NEMT is -aa and it is added to the finite verb after the PNG marker. In the SMT the question marker is -aa or -oo and added to the verb after the tense marker dropping the verbal ending -a as in the followings:

NEMT	SMT	
naan poonanaa	naan poonoo/ poonaa	Did I go?
nii poonayaa	nii poonoo	Did you go?
avan poonaanaa	avan poonoo	Did he go?
aval poonaalaa	aval poonoo	Did she go?

4. In NEMT the particle -aala is used to denote causative meaning while in SMT the particle -cuddi is used in that sense as in the examples given below:

NEMT	SMT	
naan vantataala	naan vantacuddi	Because I came?
nii vantataala	nii vantacuddi	Because you came?

5. In NEMT the particle -kela is used in the sense 'while', 'when' and 'at the time (of)'. In SMT the particle -cella is used in that context as in the examples given below:

NEMT	SMT	
naan vrakkela	naan varaccella	When I come
naan pookakela	naan pookaccella	When I go

In the lexical level SMT and NEMT vary in a great extant. Here also the kinship terms are taken for comparison.

Father is referred to as *vaappaa* and mother as *ummaa* in both NEMT and SMT. However, the term for mother is mostly pronounced as *mmaa* in NEMT in continuous speech dropping the initial /u/ *makan* and *makal* for son and daughter respectively are common in NEMT and SMT. However, the two variants *mavan* and *maval* are also used in SMT which are absent in NEMT. In NEMT *tampi* and *pulla* are also used as address terms instead of *makan* and *makal* respectively which are absent in SMT. Eastern Muslims as well as Tamils used to address their son as *makan* or *tampi* and daughter as *makal* or *pulla*. Nur Yalman has noted that the Muslims address their daughter as *tankacci*.[42] But it is not found in any Muslim Tamil dialects in Sri Lanka. It is not even found in Batticaloa Tamil. It is exclusively a Jaffna Tamil usage. The term *pulla* in NEMT is not only used to address daughters but also to address the wife by husband and also to address middle aged women, girls and infants.

The term for elder brother is *kaakkaa* in NEMT and *naanaa* in SMT. The Muslims from Jaffna and Trincomalee districts also use the term *naanaa* with *kaakkaa* which they predominantly use.

The Muslims of Batticaloa and Ampara districts only use the term *kaakkaa*, although they know the term *naanaa*. Some time they use this term only to refer to and to address the Southern Muslims who are living among them. However, there is a recent trend to use the term *naanaa* by some Muslims of the region, especially the younger generation who are living in the Southern regions as a process of acculturation.

The term for elder sister is invariably *daattaa* in SMT while *laattaa* and *raattaa* are used in NEMT, especially in the Ampara and Batticaloa districts. Trincomalee Muslims use the term *daattaa* as in SMT. Jaffna Muslim use *raattaa* and Mannar Muslim *taattaa*. Thus the NEMT has four variants of the term due to the change in the initial sound, / l, r, d and t /. The term for younger brother *tampi* and younger sister *tankacci* are common in all the sub-dialects of SLMT.

The following four pairs of terms are used in NEMT to distinguish some family relation- ships, the distinction of which is not found in SMT.

1. maamaa — mother's brother and father's sister's husband.
   maamanaar — father in law.
2. maami — father's sister and mother's brother's wife.
   maamiyaa — mother in law.
3. macci — daughter of mother's brother and father's sister.
   matini — wife's and husband's sister.
4. maccaan — sister's husband and elder son of maamaa and maami.
   maccinan — wife's or husband's brother and younger son of maamaa and maami.

The terms *maamanaar*, *maamiyaa*, *macci* and *maccinan* are totally absent in SMT. *maamaa*, *maami*, *matini* and *maccaan* are the terms denote all the relationships in SMT. The term *matini* has a variant *mayni* in SMT. However, in Matara the term *matini* is in use, but in galle *mayni* is used, in Kandy both *mayni* and *matini* are used but *mayni* is predominant. According to some informants the term *maccaan* has a variant *maccan* with a short vowel in the second syllable and *maccaan* is used to address friends and *maccan* is used to refer to and address relatives. The usage of Jaffna, Mannar, and Trincomalee Muslims is similar to that of Southern Muslims. They also have only the terms *maamaa*, *maami*, *matini* and *maccaan*.

The above discussion clearly shows the differences between NEMT and SMT in the use of kinship terms. Out of the total of 55 kinship terms collected in NEMT only 25 are common to both NEMT and SMT and the rest of the 30 terms are not found in SMT. The percentage of the common core is 45.45% and the deviation is 54.55%. This implies that the mutual intelligibility between these two dialects is significantly low.

Another important area of difference between NEMT and SMT is Sinhala loan words. SMT has heavily borrowed Sinhala words used in different domains like food, dress, plants, animals, administration and occupations etc. On the contrary very few Sinhala words are used in NEMT.[43]

Arabic Tamil

Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil is some time mistakenly referred to as Arabic Tamil by some Southern Muslim politicians as we have noted earlier and also by some Muslim scholars because it is blended with hundreds of Arabic loan words mainly in the cultural domain owing to the inalienable relationship between Islam and Arabic.

Azeez has noted that "most of the Sri Lankan Muslims speak Tamil. But in their speech and the speech of South Indian Muslims many Arabic words are used even though there are equivalent Tamil words. Therefore to denote this Muslim Tamil the term Arabic Tamil

is used. Arabic Tamil was once written in Arabic scripts. To represent the Tamil sounds t, c, n, and p which are not found in Arabic, they used some special diacritic marks with Arabic scripts. Nowadays Arabic Tamil is mostly written in Tamil."[44]

For Azeez, it is obvious that, Arabic Tamil is the Tamil spoken and written by the Muslims with a mixture of Arabic words whether it is written in Arabic or Tamil scripts. Azeez has expressed the same idea in some of his other articles too.[45]

Shukri also has the same opinion on Arabic Tamil. He includes the spoken and written varieties of Muslim Tamil into the label of Arabic Tamil. According to him "the Tamil spoken and written by them (Muslims), assumed a peculiar pattern and shape in respect of the scripts and the vocabulary which was generally known as Arabic Tamil."[46] However, several scholars maintain a different opinion of Arabic Tamil. According to them the Tamil written by Muslims using the Arabic scripts is known as Arabic Tamil.[47]

Muslims in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka have produced a large number of literary works in Tamil. Islamic Tamil literature has at least eight hundred years of uninterrupted history and most of the major works were written purely in the Tamil script.[48] At the same time the Muslims also had been using the Arabic script for writing Tamil texts for several reasons from the early period of their social formation. This variety of Muslim Tamil written in Arabic script is widely known as Arabic Tamil. Azeez (1941) himself has expressed this view in one of his earlier articles with which he himself contradicted later. I quote him below:

> "The Ceylon Moors frequently in the past and not so frequently in the present have been using Arabic scripts with modifications, to write their Tamil. This is called Arabic Tamil. Being Tamil written in Arabic characters, Arabic-Tamil is something which neither the Arabs nor the Tamils could understand. The Arabs being able to read but not understand while, the Tamils could not understand but for their inability to read the scripts.

Arabic-Tamil possesses neither a separate grammar nor a separate literature, and therefore cannot be elevated to the position of a language. Arabic-Tamil was at one time preferred in the writing of Muslim literature owing to the difficulty of some of the Arabic words being satisfactorily pronounced if written in Tamil. But this difficulty has been overcome by the use, in the purely Tamil scripts, of special diacritical marks improvised for the purpose."[49]

This can be considered a clear exposition of the idea of Arabic Tamil. However, from a socio linguistic point of view Arabic Tamil can be redefined as a variety of Muslim Tamil written in Arabic script exclusively used by the Muslims, mostly for their religious purposes, mainly to promote religious literacy among Muslims whose mother tongue is Tamil but who are illiterate in Tamil.

Arabic Tamil is an evidence of the impact of Arabic on Tamil language. Arabic has made such impacts on several national languages of the Asian and African countries where Islam spread during the medieval periods. Swahili, Somali, Turkey, Persian and Malay are some examples. They adopted the Arabic script to write and some of them later romanized. Urdu, a dialect of Hindi written in the Arabic script, was later politically elevated to a separate language and recognized as the official language of Pakistan. The Muslims of Bengal and Kerala also used Arabic the script to write Bengali and Malayalam and the terms Arabic Bengali and Arabic Malayalam are also in use.[50]

Several reasons were speculated for the origin of Arabic Tamil, three of which can be considered important.

1. To promote religious literacy among the illiterate Muslims. It was a fact that till the early part of the 20th century the literacy rate of the Muslims was very low. In 1910 the literacy rate of the Muslim was male 6.5% and female 1.9%. At that time the total literacy rate in Sri Lanka was male 40.4% and female 10.6%.[51] However, most of the Muslims were able to read the Arabic script

for their religious obligations. They could not understand Arabic but they could read Arabic and they could speak Tamil but could not read or write Tamil. In this context it was easy to promote literacy in the known language using the known scripts. It was in this sociolinguistic situation that the Arabic Tamil might have originated.[52]

2. It was a long time belief that the commentaries and the interpretations of the Qur'an *(tafsir)* should be written only using the Arabic script. Azeez (1968:34) noted that even in the 1920s and after there was an argument that these *tafsirs* should not be written in Tamil script.[53] This attitude, that matters related to the Qur'an should be in Arabic Tamil, might be one of the valid reasons for the origin of Arabic Tamil. The ordinary as well as the orthodox Muslims have a sacred value for the Arabic scripts. They still identify the Arabic letters as *koruvaan eluttu* that is the letters of the Qur'an.

3. Arabic Tamil was useful to write Arabic words without distorting their phonetic shapes and meaning. Since there is a vast difference between Arabic and Tamil in their phonemic and writing systems, it is difficult to write many of the Arabic words in the Tamil script without distorting their sound and meaning. For examples, for the following five Arabic symbol ء, خ, ح, ق, ك Tamil has only one equivalent symbol க and it is impossible to write the Arabic words which begin with the above symbols without any distortion. However, in Arabic Tamil which uses all the Arabic symbols this problem can be avoided. It is said that this could also be a reason for the origin of the Arabic Tamil.

Whatever the reasons for the origin of the Arabic Tamil, it was widely used by the Muslims till the mid 20th century. According to Gani (1963) more than 200 literary works in prose and verse form were available in print in Arabic Tamil.[54] There were also hundreds of unprinted manuscripts. Uwais and Ajmalkan have published a bibliography of Islamic Tamil literature with a little more than 2000 entries, up to 1950.[55] Unfortunately they didn't take care to identify the Arabic Tamil works and only a few works have been marked by them within brackets that they are in Arabic Tamil. However, we can safely say that not more than 10% of the total production of Islamic Tamil literature published in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka are in Arabic Tamil. Major Islamic Tamil literary works like *Ceerap puraanam* and *Puthukushaam* are in Tamil but not in Arabic Tamil.

Most of the Arabic Tamil texts are on religious matters. Some of them are intermixed with Arabic and Tamil texts. For example, the '*tafsir*'s consist of the Qur'anic verses in Arabic and their translation and commentaries in (Arabic) Tamil. Some of them are exclusively in Tamil mixed with varying proportions of Arabic words depending on the nature of the text. Even a few newspapers were published in Arabic Tamil in the late 19th century. Two such papers *Kashpurran an Kalbiljan* and *Ajayibul Akbar* are mentioned by Venkadasamy.[56]

It will be interesting to note some aspects of the writing system of Arabic Tamil and how the Muslims used the Arabic script to write Tamil. Arabic belongs to the family of Semitic languages and has its own phonemic writing system which is very different from that of the Tamil, a Dravidian language with a syllabic script. Both the languages are among the few classical as well as modern languages of the world and have rich grammatical and literary traditions.

Arabic follows a consonantal system that is, it has distinct symbols or letters only for consonants while the vowels are optional and not represented by separate letters but by a few diacritical marks without which Arabic texts can still be read and understood.[57] Arabic has 28 consonants and 6 vowels and it is written usually from right to left.

Tamil has 30 basic letters comprising 12 vowels and 18 consonants and follows essentially a syllabic system of writing as many other Indian languages, in which vowel signs occur only in the initial position of the words and when they occur after a

consonants, the combination of the consonant and the vowel is represented by a syllabic letters. Tamil has 216 syllabic symbols apart from the basic symbols of vowels and consonants and it is written from left to right.

Although the Tamil and Arabic writing systems are totally different, the Muslims were able to make a few necessary modifications to the existing Arabic script without inventing new letters to sufficiently represent the Tamil phonemic system by the alien writing system. They invented two new diacritic marks similar to those used in Arabic to represent the Tamil vowels /e, ee, o and oo/ which are not found in Arabic. They also made some simple modifications in the existing Arabic consonants to accommodate the nine Tamil consonants / ங, ச, ஞ, ட, ண, ப, எ, ந, ர / which are not found in Arabic. With these simple changes they could create a new writing system for Tamil. There is no inherent and inalienable relationship between a language and its writing system. In principle any writing system can be used to write any language with the necessary modifications except the language like Chinese which uses ideograph. Arabic Tamil is a fine example for this.

Arabic Tamil is now out of use; gradually it came to an end. No new books or texts are written in Arabic Tamil. Most of the Arabic Tamil literature has been edited and reprinted in Tamil. The literacy rate of the Muslim population has been continuously raised and today most of the Muslim males and females can read and understand Tamil. According to the 1981 Census the total literacy rate of the Sri Lankan Muslims is 79.3%, of this, males 86.7% and female 71.5%. The religious attitude has also changed. The translations of the Qur'an and interpretation and commentaries of the Qur'an and the general books on Islam are widespread in Tamil and they are consciously promoted. Arabic loan words in the Muslim Tamil literature are restricted to essential vocabulary and the Muslim writers tend to use less Arabic words in their writing. We can notice this trend in the Islamic Tamil writing after the 1950s. Thus the socio-cultural factors that were behind the emergence of the Arabic

Tamil have gradually disappeared causing the demise of the Arabic Tamil. It is now an aspect of the past history of the Tamil speaking Muslims of Sri Lanka and India. However, Arabic is still an inherent part of their spoken dialect of Tamil.

Attitude towards Arabic and the Use of Arabic in Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil Dialect

Arabic is the religious language of the Sri Lankan Muslims, somewhat similar to Pali and Sanskrit for the Buddhists and Hindus, respectively. Hence, Arabic is sacred and very important to the Muslims. The Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Muslims is in Arabic and the Muslims believe that the Qur'anic verses are the words of Allah. The ordinary Muslim believes that Arabic is the language of Allah and it was the first language taught by Allah to Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by Allah. They also believe that all the human beings will talk to Allah in Arabic, when they are resurrected on the Day of Judgment. .

The ordinary Muslim folk refer to the Arabic script as 'koruvaan eluttu', literally the 'letter of the Qur'an', hence, for them the Arabic script is also sacred as the Qur'an and it is a sin for them to step on any thing written in Arabic. When they saw a peace of paper written in Arabic script fallen on the floor, they immediately pick it up, kiss it and keep it in a higher place or put it in the well.

The word kitab in Arabic means book. However, in the Sri Lankan Muslim vocabulary kitab means only religious books written in Arabic or in Arabic Tamil. The Muslim folks believe that whatever said in these kitabs are sacred and should be accepted without question. These sum up the attitude of Muslims towards Arabic and the Arabic script.

Arabic Competence

Although Arabic has an important place in the day to day life of the Sri Lankan Muslims, very few are competent in Arabic, that is, very few of them can speak, write and understand Arabic. Only

the religious scholars, known as *aalim* or *ulama* or *maulavi* who studied in Arabic colleges in Sri Lanka and India, are competent in Arabic. They are more competent in classical Arabic than in modern Arabic. There are a few such scholars in each village. They too do not use Arabic for their day to day communication. There is no such Arabic speaking environment in Sri Lanka. Two *aalims* may converse in Arabic for private communication in the presence of others or converse in Arabic with religious scholars who visit Sri Lanka from Arab countries. Such occasions are rare.

All the Muslim children at the age of five or six are sent to the *Qur'an madarasas*. These are the afternoon religious schools where the *lebbes* or *aalims* teach the children to read the Qur'an. This is a traditional way of training, only to read the Qur'an but not to the extent of understanding the meaning of the text. Most of the children master the Arabic scripts and their pronunciation and to read the Qur'an fluently by the age of eleven or twelve. They would also memorize some chapters of the Qur'an, as all Muslims are expected to, in order to perform their religious rituals like daily prayers. However, most of them do not know the meaning of the texts while some would have memorized the text and the meaning. Although, all the Muslims have learned the Arabic script and the phonetic system, the vast majority cannot speak or understand Arabic.

From the 1940s to 1975 Arabic teachers were appointed to the Muslim schools to teach Arabic to the Muslim students. These teachers were *aalims* or *maulavis* who graduated from the traditional Arabic colleges. Arabic was taught as a subject in most of the Muslim schools from year 3 and Arabic is also included as a subject in the G.C.E O/L and A/L curriculum. However, the number of candidates who sit for these examinations is very low. Arabic is also taught as a subject for the general and special degree programmes in some of the Sri Lankan universities. Recently a separate Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies was also established at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. Most of the students for the Arabic courses are not enrolled directly from government schools. The traditional

Arabic colleges are the feeding institutions for these courses. Some of the students who graduated from these colleges sit the G.C.E. (A/L) examination and enter the National Universities to get a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies. This is similar to Buddhist monks entering Universities from *Pirivanas* to follow degree courses in Pali and Buddhist Studies.

The Use of Arabic

Although most of the Muslims do not know Arabic, a large number of Arabic words and phrases are used by them in their day to day life with or without knowing their meaning. The use of Arabic in the day to day life of the Sri Lankan Muslims can be divided into the following three domains.

1. Religious rituals
2. Naming individuals and institutions
3. Day to day communication

Ritualistic Use of Arabic

Because of the inherent relationship between Islam and Arabic, the Muslims have to use Arabic texts in their religious practices such as daily prayers and other rituals. In these contexts Muslims do not use their mother tongue, Tamil and it is obligatory to use Arabic texts. The following are some of such contexts and situations:

1. Daily prayers and the call for the prayer.
2. Marriage and death rites
3. Greeting people
4. Slaughtering animals for meat
5. The beginning and end of social functions such as public and committee meetings. [It is a common practice among Muslims to begin such events after reciting some verses from the Qur'an (this is called *qira'at*) and finishing them reciting the *salawat* on Prophet Mohamed.]

The utterances used in these contexts are exclusively in Arabic. They are memorized and may be uttered aloud or inaudibly according to context and purpose.

Some of the *ulamaas* who perform marriage and death rites, sometimes use Tamil in between Arabic texts. However, most of the *ulamaas* tend to use exclusively Arabic the content of which would not be understood by the gatherings.

The Arabic texts are also used in some kind of healing rituals. These are done to counter the bad effect of evil eye, fear of sprits and ghosts and some forms of mental depression. Selected verses from the Qur'an are used for these purposes.

In all of these contexts the Arabic texts are used without knowing their meaning and this constitutes ritualistic use of Arabic.

Naming in Arabic

Now Muslims exclusively use Arabic to name their children as a symbol of their cultural identity. During the colonial period it was a common practice among the Muslims mostly in the villages to name their children in Tamil or in Tamil + Arabic or Arabic + Tamil hybrid forms. This practice has gradually changed in the post-colonial period due to the consolidation of ethnic consciousness and cultural identity. They also use Arabic to name their religious and cultural institutions.

Arabic in day to day Communication

Hundreds of Arabic words and expressions are used in the day to day communication of the Muslims to convey their religious and cultural needs. Without these Arabic loan words it is impossible to them to have social intercourse through language since these are inseparably mingled with the culture of the Muslims. This is one of the important linguistic aspects that make it difficult to understand the Muslim's speech by a non Muslim speaker of Tamil. For example the Muslims divide a day into five time slots according to their daily prayers as follows:

1.	cubahu	(subah)	- early morning
2.	luharu	(luhar)	- noon
3.	asaru	(asr)	- after noon
4.	mahari	(mahrib)	- late evening
5.	isaa	(isha)	- night

This time division is essential in Muslim Tamil. If one asks a question 'what time can I come?' the answer would be like one of the following:

asarukku vaanka	Come by asar
asarukku munti vaanka	Come before asar
asarukkup poraku vaanka	Come after asar
asarukkum maharikkum itayila vaanka	Come between asar and mahari

Such sentences are very common in Muslim Tamil and it is obvious that a non Muslim speaker who does not know these time divisions would not be able to understand the Muslim speech.

We can divide the Arabic loan words used in Muslim Tamil into two major groups. The first group includes the common loan words used by the entire Muslim community whether educated or uneducated in their day to day communication. The second group includes special loan words or technical vocabulary used by religious scholars or members of a particular religious group in a specific context to discuss Islamic theology and religious practices.[58]

The above discussion clearly shows that although Tamil is the mother tongue of the Sri Lankan Muslims, they speak a distinct dialect of Tamil and Arabic plays a major role in the Muslim society as the language of their religion and a symbol of their socio cultural identity.

End Notes and References

1. See, Devaraja, (1994)
2. This aspect is discussed in detail in the next chapter.
3. Azeez, I.L.M.A. (1907), p.11.

4. Uwais, M.M., (1986), p.150.
5. MARGA, (1986), pp.20-23.
6. Nuhman, M.A., (1988)
7. Ameen, M.I.M., (2000), p.121.The quotations from Ameen (2000), Nahiya (1991), Hanseer (1989) and from the other Tamil documents translated by the author.
8. Nahiya, (1991), pp.9-10.
9. Hanseer, (1989), pp.224-226.
10. Azeez, A.M.A. (1941), "The Ceylon Muslims and the Mother tongue," in Ceylon Daily News, 10 December, 1941.
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13. Azeez,A.M.A.(1953), "Muslims and the Medium of Instruction", in Ceylon Daily News, 12th March, 1953.
14. Azeez, A.M.A. (1941).
15. MARGA, (1986), p.35.
16. Ibid., p.30.
17. This aspect is discussed in the next Chapter.
18. Azeez, A.M.A.(1953).
19. There is no official statistics available on the medium of instruction of the Muslim students. The statistics given were collected from different sources through personal contexts.
20. Kearney, Robert, N. (1978)
21. Azeez, A.M.A. (1941)
22. See for example, Vidyanathan (1962), Kandaia (1964), and Balasundaram (1979).
23. Hansard, 13 June 1956.
24. Hanseer, (1989), pp.372, 373.
25. Ibid., p.226
26. Ibid., pp. 325-341.
27. Ibid., p.341.
28. Hansard,12 June 1956.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Hansard, 8 June 1956.
32. Hansard, 11 June 1956.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

36. Senate Hansard, 3, July 1956.
37. Ibid.
38. See for the concept of Diglossia , Ferguson (1959), for Tamil Diglossia, Shanmugam Pillai (1960) and for Diglossia in South Asian Languages, Shapiro and Schiffman (1981).
39. See for Tamil Dialectology, Seenivasa Varma (1986), for Sri Lankan Tamil, Balasubramanian atel. (1999) and for Sri Lankan Muslim Tamil, Nuhman (1979).
40. Nuhman, M.A. (1979).
41. NMT has regional variations in this respect. The PNG markerless finite verbal construction is more prevalent in the Southern Province than the other Provinces in the South.
42. Noor Yalman (1997), p.133.
43. Nuhman, M.A.M. (1979).
44. Azeez, A.M.A. (1963), p.65.
45. See Azeez, A.M.A. (1956, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1968).
46. Shukri (1986), p.345.
47. Nuhman, M.A., (1981)
48. For the details of the History of Islamic Tamil Literature, see, Uwais and Ajmal Khan (1986,1990, 1994)
49. Azeez, A.M.A. (1941)
50. (Gani, R.P.M. (1963), p.209.
51. Mahroof, M.M.M. (1980).
52. See also Uwais and Ajmalkan, (1986), pp.60-61.
53. Azeez, A.M.A. (1968), p.34.
54.. Gani, R.P.M. (1963)
55. Uwais and Ajmalkan (1991)
56. Venkadasamy. (1962).
57. Crystal, David, (1989).
58. For more details of Arabic Loan Wards in Muslim Tamil see Nuhman (1982).

Chapter 4

Politics of Muslim Identity:
Historical Roots

This chapter deals with the historical development of ethnic identity among Sri Lankan Muslims. It traces, how a culturally conscious religious community gradually transformed itself into a strong politically motivated ethnic community in Sri Lanka. It argues that Muslim identity is a reactive politico-cultural ideology that has been constructed and developed in relation to and as a response to the Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalistic ideologies throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Islamic Revival and English Education

Sri Lankan Muslims, the third largest ethnic community in Sri Lanka, have been coexisting and interacting harmoniously with other major ethnic communities in this country for many centuries from the medieval period. They were treated very well under the Sinhala kings in the pre-colonial period. They settled in the coastal commercial towns of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) during this period and engaged mainly in trade and commerce. However, during the colonial period their very existence was challenged by the colonial rulers, first by the Portuguese and then by the Dutch, who were bitter competitors of the Muslims in trade and they had to resettle in a scattered fashion in the interior countryside under the patronage of the Sinhala kings in the unoccupied Kandian Kingdom and engage in other occupations like agriculture, fishing and weaving for their livelihood.[1] There was room for cultural assimilation to some degree, and they shared several significant cultural features with other communities.

The Muslims of Sri Lanka were merely a silent cultural community without a politically driven separate ethnic identity until the beginning of the modern era, which is marked by the semi capitalist transformation of the Sri Lankan society during the 19th century under the British rule. During this period, the traditional feudal system and the self-reliant village social structure were gradually collapsing and a semi capitalist social system based on a newly introduced colonial economy was emerging with new social class formations, namely the working class and the bourgeoisie.[2]

The underdeveloped colonial economy that replaced the older self-reliant social system was not capable of adequately catering to the needs of the newly emerged social classes, and this inevitably led to the dominant classes of the different communities competing with each other for economic prosperity on communal or ethnic lines. Thus the history of modern Sri Lanka, beginning with the latter half of the 19th century, is also the history of the development of ethnic consciousness and conflicts among the major ethnic communities namely the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Muslims, who were living in harmony throughout the pre-modern period except for some dynastic or royal conflicts.[3]

The social transformation from the feudal system to mercantile capitalism that gradually took place during the 19th and early 20th centuries, the introduction of the British educational and political systems, and the consequent competition for economic and political power between the different social groups heavily contributed to the polarization of the Sri Lankan society along ethnic lines during the British colonial rule.[4] In the post -independence period, we witness a virtual ethnic segregation propelled by the consolidation of ethno-nationalisms and the on-going ethnic war.[5] The development of ethnic identity among Sri Lankan Muslims should be understood from this historical perspective. The resurgence of

Islam as a political power at the global level from the late 19th century has also been a contributory external factor in this respect.

Muslims as a scattered minority in ethnically tense Sri Lanka have been more vulnerable to the emerging Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalisms and domination in the South and North-East, respectively, and they have had experiences of ethnic violence against them in the past and the present history of this country.[6] This has led to the development of a sense of insecurity in the psyche of Muslims and has motivated them to seek a consolidated ethnic identity based on Islam.

As I mentioned earlier, Sri Lankan Muslims were merely a silent cultural community until the beginning of the modern era, which is marked by the semi-capitalist transformation of the Sri Lankan society which had been taking place during the 19th century under British rule.

Although, the Sri Lankan Muslims were a closed and traditional society and were comparatively backward in economy and modern education, there was a tiny elitist group which included the affluent mercantile class and the emerging educated middle class centred mainly around Colombo and Kandy.

Owing to the development of the plantation industry and mercantile capitalism from the early 19th century, some Muslims also were able to accumulate wealth and formed an elitist upper class within the community. They mainly accumulated capital through trade and urban property.[7] They were involved in the export trade of various goods like cinnamon, pearls, tobacco, areca nuts, coffee, tea, rubber, coconut, and gems.[8] "The source of important capital accumulation among Southern Muslims was gem trade" and the Macan Markar family gained a prominent position within the Muslim community, mainly because of its wealth accumulated from the gem trade.[9] Some of the Colombo based Muslims became wealthy through building contracts. A. M. Wappuchi Marikar (1830-1925) and his son W. M. Abdul Rahman (1868-1933), the grand father and father of Sir Razik Fareed respectively, were prominent building contractors

at that time. The Galle Face Hotel, the General Post Office, the Custom Complex, the Old Town Hall, the Museum, the Clock Tower, Maligakanda Reservoir and some other important buildings in Colombo were built by Wappuchi Marikar. His son and grand son became prominent political leaders of the Muslim community. Some Muslims became rich through wholesale and retail trade in the local market. "There were 35 of them in 1883 in Colombo who dealt in the retail of a large variety of goods."[10] As I.L.M. Abdul Azeez proudly pointed out in replying Ponnambalam Ramanathan, in the late 19th century, the newly emerged Muslim elite included "wholesale merchants, large shop keepers, planters, and wealthy landed proprietors and in point of wealth, they were only next to the Sinhalese among the native races of the Island."[11]

It was this elitist group which was ethnically sensitive and politically motivated, that led its community into the modern era through their revivalist activities. Ethnic consciousness seeks a separate ethnic identity for a community based on its cultural ideology and traditional mythology. The dominant Sinhalese elite sought their identity in Buddhism and their imaginative historical mythology and their Tamil counterparts sought their identity first in Hinduism especially in Saivaism and later in their glorious linguistic and cultural heritage. Similarly, the Sri Lankan Muslim elite sought their identity in Islam and their glorious Islamic historical past. Hence, religious revivalism was common among these communities during the late 19th century and it was also was a process of modernization of Sri Lankan societies during that period.

The Turkish, Egyptian and Indian Islamic revivalist and political movements of that time were the external sources of inspiration to the Muslim elite. In the late 19th century most parts of the Muslim world became the subject of European colonial rule and there were struggles for freedom from imperialism and for modernization all over the Muslim world. The Ottoman Empire was collapsing and Turkey, the centre of the Empire, was struggling for her survival.[12] However, the caliph of the Ottoman Empire was

considered as the spiritual leader of the Muslim umma. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century Abdul Hameed II (1876 – 1909) was the ruling sultan of Turkey, until he was deposed by the army in April 1909.[13] Abdul Hameed was against the nationalist movements and Islamic modernism, and he supported the traditional Islamic values and thoughts but at the same time "he continued to import western technology and methods."[14] It was an indication of the economic modernism and spiritual conservatism that prevailed in the Muslim world.

Although the Sri Lankan Muslims were the subjects of British ruler, they accepted Abdul Hameed, the caliph of the Islamic Empire, as their spiritual leader. They praised him and prayed for him in every Friday sermon, following the practice in the Islamic world; they collected money and sent it to support his effort to build a railway line to Arabia, and they also celebrated his silver jubilee and opened a school in Colombo named after him as Hameedia Muslim School. The Muslims who returned from Istanbul, after greeting the caliph, were honored by the title 'Effendi' in Turkish style.[15] The Sultan of Turkey also appointed some prominent Sri Lankan Muslims as his representatives in Colombo. Ameen (2000) has named the following three: Hussain Lebbei Marikar (1865-1890), H. L. M. Abdul Majeed (1891-1904) and Macan Markar Suldin (1904–1913).[16] The British government also appointed Sri Lankan Muslims as Consuls. Mohamed Macan Markar was appointed as Vice-Consul to Turkey in 1906 and he was made Consul in 1915.[17] The Sri Lankan Muslim elite were concerned about Turkey's struggle for modernization during that period.

Egypt was another inspirational centre for the Sri Lankan Muslims from the late 19th century. The Al Azhar University of Cairo, one of the oldest institutions of Islamic knowledge, established in A.D. 969, had a prominent place in the Sri Lankan Muslim mind. Egypt was dominated by two European powers, the British and the French in the 19th century and a strong anti imperialist and nationalist movement emerged there in the late 19th century. Seyed Jalaluddin

Afghani and Sheik Mohamed Abdu were the two prominent Islamic reformist thinkers of that time. Afghani, a strong anti- imperialist was remoulding the Islamic consciousness all over the Muslim world by his writing and speeches promoting the pan-Islamic ideology. He travelled around the Muslim world preaching his ideology. He was in Egypt, Iran, Turkey, India and Afghanistan campaigning against the European power in the Muslim world. He also visited England, France and Russia. He actively supported Abdul Hameed II, the sultan of Turkey, in spreading the pan-Islamic movement. 'As a militant reformist' and a vehement anti- imperialist he was an inspiration to the younger generation of Islamic intellectuals of the Islamic world. He wanted to 'revive scientific thought' and reform the education system of the Muslims learning from the West, but he was deeply rooted in the Islamic heritage.[18]

Sheik Mohamed Abdu, a disciple and a friend of Afghani worked closely with him in promoting pan-Islamism and they jointly edited a journal in Arabic to promote their reformist ideas. Abdu argued that Islam was not incompatible with the basics of western thought and he interpreted some Islamic concepts in a rational way. While Afghani continued to resist western imperialism, Abdu thought that Muslims first should "concentrate on educational and religious reform and inculcate those aspects of western civilization which were in line with Islam."[19]

Egypt was in political turmoil in the late 19th century. There was a growing nationalist movement and political protest. Arabi Pasha (1839 – 1911), a colonel, and his companions were at the forefront in the agitation, first for a military reform that later expanded into a campaign for total political freedom and reform. Arabi Pasha, an Egyptian nationalist, born to a peasant family was educated at the Al Azhar University. He was inspired by the activities and thinking of Afghani and Abdu. He had the support of the peasantry and the public. He started his agitation in 1881 against Khedive government demanding the removal of the war minister and inquiry into corruption in the military administration. Although

he succeeded twice in making some reforms in the government, Pasha and his companions were finally defeated in September 1882 by the British and expelled to Sri Lanka in December the same year and he arrived here in January 1883. Thus, the Sri Lankan Muslims had an opportunity to have direct contact with the Egyptian nationalist reformers and were inspired by them in their reformist activities.

The Indian revivalist movement also had a profound impact on the Sri Lankan Muslims in the late 19th century. Indian reformist leaders particularly Sir Seyed Ahamed Khan (1817-1898), an influential aristocrat whose family had a link with the Mogul Royalty, greatly inspired the Sri Lankan Muslim revivalists, especially Siddi Lebbe. Unlike Afghani, Seyed Ahamed Khan was loyal to the British Raj and the Raj rewarded him with the title Sir and spoke of him as its "foremost loyal Mohammedan"[20] For this reason Ahamed Khan was severely criticized by Afghani.[21] Ahamed Khan wanted to serve his people without antagonizing the British. As Raj Mohan Gandhi suggested, in the context of the 1857 rebellion and massacre of the Muslim rebels and innocents by the British, Ahamed Khan played a role as a 'reconciler' and it was valued by the British.[22]

Seyed Ahamed Khan wanted to modernize the Indian Muslims and he found that English and modern education were the main tools for that. He sent his son to Cambridge and he himself "had adopted British clothes and table manners."[23] He started the Scientific Society to "bring the knowledge and literature of the nations of the western world within reach of the immense masses of the people of the Eastern."[24] But Seyed was deeply rooted in Islam as many other Islamic modernist of the time. He wrote extensively on Islam giving a rational interpretation to it. He also published four volumes of a commentary on the Qur'an between 1880 and 1888.[25] As Adeel Khan (2005:164) says "he presented a modern rationalist version of Islam that was dismissive of the folk, syncretic Sufi Islam of the countryside."[26] This is true of most of the Islamic religious modernizers.

Seyed Ahamed Khan's foremost contribution was the establishment of the Aligar University. It was a place for the Muslims to "acquire an English education without prejudice to their religion."[27] The British generously helped him in his project. "The Governor released 75 acres in Aligar. Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy gave Rs.10000 from his personal fund, Lord Lytton, his successor, laid the foundation stone in 1877."[28] It was named the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College and later renamed as Aligar Muslim University in 1920. It offered arts, science and law courses in English. Most of the teachers and the principals were Englishmen. Ahamed Khan was not in favour of female education. He said "no satisfactory education can be provided for Mohammedan females until a large number of Mohammedan males received a sound education."[29] The Aligar College was opened not only for Muslims; Hindus were also enrolled and they were exempted from the compulsory religious courses. "To win Hindu confidence Seyed Ahamed forbade the slaughter of cows on the campus. In 1887 three of the managing committee of eleven were Hindus; in 1894 two of the seven Indian teachers were Hindus; and in some of the early years of the College Hindu students even outnumbered Muslim ones."[30]

However, Seyed Ahamed did not see any possibility of Hindu-Muslim unity in India in the future. Once he said "I am convinced that both these communities will not join wholeheartedly in any thing ... on account of the so-called "educated" people, hostility between these two communities will increase immensely in the future. He who lives will see."[31] In fact, it was the historical experience of modern India. He opposed the Indian National Congress and he said "we do not want to become subjects of the Hindus instead of subject of the people of the Book."[32] In this context it may be true to say that he was "the instigator of the two nation theory that termed the Hindus and Muslims as two separate nations."[33] After his death, the Aligar University became the cradle of Muslim separatism in India.

Islamic revivalism in Sri Lanka in the late 19th century should be viewed in the perspective of the Islamic nationalist and revivalist movements in the larger Islamic world that I have just briefly outlined. They certainly had an impact on Sri Lankan Muslims.

The Sri Lankan ground situation was also conducive for the emergence of Islamic revivalism. The revivalist activities of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil Hindu elite were in full swing at the time against Christian domination. By the late 19th century Christianity had been well rooted through English education and proselytization activities of the Christian missionaries with the patronage of the British Government. Although it started from the Dutch period, as Jayawardena points out "aggressive proselytization, combined with the prospect of economic and political advantage from the foreign occupiers, led sections of the inhabitants of coastal areas of the island to adopt various brands of Christianity."[34] Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus converted to Christianity in large numbers during the period. According to the 1881 census, 162,270 Sinhala Christians and 82,200 Tamil Christians were in Sri Lanka. These converts also included landowners and local capitalists and their conversion ensured them 'a greater involvement and entrenchment in the whole colonial establishment.'[35] Understandably Buddhist and Hindu nationalists had the fear that Christianity would swallow their religion and culture. Ananda Guruge expressed this fear with a degree of exaggeration as follows: "By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British efforts at denationalizing the Sinhalas and weaning them away from their religion, culture and tradition had reached the zenith and the disappearance of Buddhism from Ceylon was imminent."[36]

In this socio-cultural context, Buddhist resistance to Christianity arose as a revivalist movement during the late 19th century. Although, as Guruge points out "one of the earliest acts of overt opposition (to Christianity) was the publication of parodies on Christian tracts as early as 1826"[37], the Buddhist revivalist activities against the domination of Christianity became stronger during and after the 1860s from which time the Sinhala merchant capitalist class

started to financially support the Buddhist revivalist movement[38] "With the arrival of Colonel Olcott in 1880, the Buddhists found an efficient leader who was capable of translating their religious and national aspirations to action through a well conceived plan and programme"[39] Henry Olcott formed the Buddhist Theosophical Society in the same year and he started an islandwide movement to establish a Buddhist school system.

Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), the most prominent ideologue of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalism gave a strong leadership to Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka. He left Government service in 1886 to serve the Buddhist Theosophical Society and he was the manager of Buddhist schools and the Assistant Secretary of the Buddhist Defense Committee. He started the Maha Bodhi Society in 1891 and the nationalist journal Sinhala Bauddhaya in 1906.[40] His conviction was that the Sinhala Buddhists were 'the sons of the soil' and the minorities were 'alien' people. This ideology, which rooted deeply in the minds of Sinhala nationalists, has been an important factor that alienated the minorities from mainstream politics in the later years.

Hindu revivalism emerged in the late 19th century in Sri Lanka especially in Jaffna against Christian domination. Christian missionaries were active in Jaffna from the early 19th century and modern English education virtually was their monopoly. They opened several English and Tamil schools in Jaffna and were successful in converting a number of people not only from the lower castes but more significantly from the upper caste *vellala* elite. They also published several journals and newspapers from the mid 19th century to propagate Christian ideology. Some of the newspapers are: Uthaya Thaarakai (1841), Uraikallu (1845), Ilankaapimani (1863), Paaliyar Neesan (1864), Ilankai Kaavalan (1864), Ilankai Paathukaavalan (1868), Kathoolikka Paathukavalan (1876) and Sanmaarkka Poothini (1885).[41]

The Jaffna Hindu *vellalar* elite resisted the Christian domination to hold their social dominance. Arumuka Navalar (1822–

1879) gave the leadership to Hindu revivalism in Jaffna and he also extended his activities to South India. Navalar was readily accepted and praised by the Hindu vellala community as 'ayntham kuravar', the fifth saint leader of Saivism. He studied at Rev. Peter Percival's Wesleyan Mission School, to become Jaffna Central College from 1834, and he worked there as a Tamil Pundit from 1841 to 1848. During this period he had a close relationship with Percival and assisted him in translating the Bible into Tamil. Percival finished the Translation in 1848 and published it in 1850, and later it was rejected by the other Christian missionaries and one of the reasons might be the involvement of Navalar who was not only non-Christian but also anti-Christian.[42] His fourteen year experience with Wesleyan Mission School and with Peter Percival, turned his future life into a Hindu missionary. He learned the methodology of Christianity during the period and used it successfully against Christianization for the rest of his life.

Navalar's activities as a Hindu revivalist were on the one side directed against the Christian Missionaries and on the other side against the fake Saivists of Jaffna. He wrote a number of polemical articles against both groups. He was not, however, restricted only to religious polemics. He edited and republished a number of Saivite Tamil literary works and the medieval Tamil Grammar Nannul with a commentary. He also wrote simplified Tamil grammar and Tamil readers for students.

Navalar started the first Saivite school in Jaffna, the Vannai Saivappirakasa Vidyasalai, in 1848 and he ran it without any assistance from the government for 22 years because of missionary opposition. The government agreed to give financial support to his school only in 1870 on condition that the Bible was used as a text book to teach English.[43] Navalar started the school mainly for boys, and girls were admitted only in 1872.[44] The primary motive to start the school was to safeguard Saivism from Christianity, therefore, he gave more importance to religion and he wanted to enhance the knowledge of religion and morality among the students, and he did not include in his curriculum science subjects which were taught at the missionary schools.[45]

Navalar laid a strong foundation for Hindu revival in Jaffna. After his death in 1879 his disciples continued to carry out his activities and established *naavalar marapu*, the tradition of Navalar. In 1880, one year after his death, they founded the *Saiva Paripaalana Sapai* – a society for safeguarding Saivism and a number of Saivite journals were also published throughout the 1880s. *Ilankai Nesan* commenced publication in 1877 when Navalar was alive and he contributed to it. The following journals came into circulation after his death: *Uthaya Paanu* (1880), *Saiva Sampoothini* (1881), *Vingaana Vathini* (1882), *Saivaapimaani* (1883) and *Indu Saathanam* (1889).

Navalar's mission was carried out even by the Colombo based Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and his family, who had a highest regard for Navalar. Jayawardena gives some detailed information on the Hindu revivalist activities of Ramanathan's family.[46] Unlike the Sinhala Buddhist revivalists such as Anagarika Dharmapala who took an anti- imperialist stand, the Hindu Tamil revivalists were more loyal to the British Government and were more conservative on social issues. Navalar was famous for his upper caste ideology and standing, and Ramanathan followed him. Jane Russell gives some examples of Ramanathan's policy of caste and gender discrimination. Russell says, "Ramanathan plus most of the "conservatives" believed and argued that the giving of the vote to non-*vellala* castes and to women, not only a grave mistake, leading to "mob rule," but Ramanathan especially suggested that it was an anathema to the Hindu way of life. The latter had become rigidly orthodox in his religious and social views to the point of being a "dyed in the wool" reactionary. He fought the introduction of equal seating and commensality in Jaffna schools and open temple entry for the *harijans*."[47] Kumari Jayawardena sums up the attitudes of the Hindu revivalists as follows:

"[T]hey were religious rather than secular, spoke out for a revival of traditional values, and failed to put forward

any strong opposition on social issues such as caste, dowry and women's subordination. This was in sharp contrast to India where important social reformers from the early 19th century onwards – including Rammoham Roy, Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai, Jotirao Phule, Gokhale and Ranade – spoke out social evils such as *sati*, *purdah*, dowry, child marriage, the ban on widow remarriage and the caste system."[48]

Islamic revivalism in Sri Lanka arose in the late 19th century not directly against Christianity or Christian missionary activities as in the case of Buddhist and Hindu revivalisms, because Christianity was not a direct threat to Islam in that period and Christian missionaries could not convert any significant number of Muslims to Christianity. Muslim revivalism arose basically to consolidate the elitist interest through creating wider community awareness in response to Sinhala and Tamil revivalist programmes, and encouraged by their activities.

Mohamed Casim Siddi Lebbe (1838 – 1898) was the initiator and the leading figure in the Islamic revivalist movement in Sri Lanka in the late 19th century. He set out the ideological framework for Islamic revival and Muslim ethnicity in Sri Lanka. He belonged to a prominent family in Kandy. His great grandfather Mulk Rahmatulla was an Arab trader who settled in Aluthgama and married a local woman. His grandfather Mohamed Lebbe settled in Kandy during the reign of Sri Wickrama Rajasinha and his father M. L. Siddi Lebbe was one among the few who learned English and was appointed as a proctor by the British.

Mohamed Casim Siddi Lebbe (hereafter Siddi Lebbe) was well educated along with his two brothers and two sisters, and all of them led a fairly comfortable life. Siddi Lebbe was highly competent in Arabic, Tamil, English as well as in Sinhala and had a sound knowledge in Islam and Islamic theology. He was appointed as a proctor in 1862. He was also a member of the Kandy Municipal Council for eight years. He was married to Seyda Umma the

daughter of Abdul Cader Meeyapulle, a well known trader in Kandy in 1871. She had learned Tamil and English and also had an interest in music. They did not have children and adopted a male child.[49]

Siddi Lebbe was seriously concerned about the backwardness of his community and thought that modern education was the only way to bring them to the main stream of the social and political life of the country. He realized that without English education his community would not get its share in the public life and would not advance further. To campaign for this purpose he started a Tamil weekly Muslim Nesan, (The friend of the Muslims) in Kandy in December 1882. He might have been influenced by Arumuga Navalar's Ilankai Nesan in naming his weekly Muslim Nesan. Like their Christian, Buddhist and Hindu counterparts, the Muslim elite too used journalism as a powerful instrument to create ethnic awareness among the community. About fifteen journals and newspapers were published by Muslims during the late 19th and early 20th century in Tamil and English. Some of the journals and newspapers published in the late 19th century are as follows: Puthnaalankaari (1873), Muslim Nesan (1882), Sarvajana Nesan (1886), Kashpurran an Kalpil Jan (1890), Saiful Islam (1890), Gnaana Suuriyan (1890), and Islam Mithiran (1894). These journals played a major role in formulating a religiously oriented ethnic ideology of Sri Lankan Muslims. Sidi Lebbe's Muslim Nesan became more important among them.

Siddi Lebbe In his first editorial spelt out very clearly the aims of his journal.

"We publish the weekly Muslim Nesan for the benefit of those who know only Tamil and to bring them knowledge from the Arabic *kitabs* and special features on education and other relavent matters from languages like English.

"Trade, education, religion, political activities and the world affairs would be mostly discussed in this journal. The motivation to publish this is to reform and modernize

the Muslim community and the aim of this journal is to give the pleasure of education."[50]

Siddi Lebbe ended his editorial with a Tamil verse that tells the importance of education. A rough translation would be as follows:

It can't be destroyed by flood or by the fire
No king can confiscate it
It won't be reduced by giving, only increase
No thief can steal it and guarding it is so simple
With such a wealth in hand
Why do they wonder in search of any other?

Siddi Lebbe wanted to bring his community from their long lasted seclusion from the contemporary world that was rapidly changing towards a modern era. He used the pages of the Muslim Nesan for that purpose. As Azeez stated briefly,

"Siddi Lebbe was conscious that the Muslim belonged to a world wide fraternity. Therefore he kept his people in touch with the affairs of the Muslim World – eg. Pan-Islam as practiced by Turkey with its repercussions in the British and Russian Empires, Independence Movements of Egypt, Sudan, Wahabism in Arabia, Educational Renaissance among the Indian Mussalmans, events in North Africa. Thereby did he wean the local Muslims from their cultural isolation?"[51]

Siddi Lebbe realized the limitation of individuals and wanted collective action, and in 1883 he appealed to the affluent Muslim elite in Colombo through his weekly to form a Muslim Association in order to consolidate Muslim solidarity and to pressurize the Government to get the necessary benefits for the community. According to him there was awareness among the Muslims at that time regarding education and they were searching for it which was indicated by the opening of a number of bookshops and clubs in several towns, and he said it was the time to work together. Siddi Lebbe also pointed out that "if we look at the last thirty years of Ceylon history, it is clear that except the Muslims, the other communities were competitively progressing in education and social reforms, but the Muslims without concentrating on this were fighting each other for leadership."[52] He insisted that in order to achieve progress, there should be unity among Muslims.

Siddi Lebbe decided to settle in Colombo in 1884 to carry out his mission and he wrote in Muslim Nesan (12.05.1884) addressing the Colombo Muslims that he had come to live with them in Colombo, the birth place of his father and requested their kindness. The desire to work for Muslim education brought him there and he wanted to dedicate his life to that service.[53]

The Muslim community however, was not willing to enter the modern education system introduced in the 19th century, for several reasons. One of them, speculated by many writers, was the fear of Christianization. During that period most of the schools were established and controlled by the Christian Missionaries. The 'traditional and conservative' Muslims had the fear that the English education may lead their children to Christianity as they witnessed in the Sinhala and Tamil communities. This fear was clearly stated by Azeez as follows:

"English education thus became closely associated with Christianity, and quite naturally, the sprit of non-cooperation hardened among the Muslims to a boycott of English Schools. By this the Muslim showed that they were not prepared to endanger the faith of their children, even though they were fully conscious that thereby they were sacrificing their chances of obtaining Government jobs, or joining the learned professions. Such was their zeal for the ancestral faith."[54]

Another factor widely believed to be behind the unwillingness was that the construction of the Muslims as a trading community, a "notion that as those who drew their livelihood from trade, which provide its own avenues for social mobility by opening up opportunities for the accumulation of wealth, education could contribute materially little towards the improvement of the situation

of the Muslims."[55] This notion that 'Muslims are traders' was a colonial construction and accepted by the Muslim elite themselves because they traced their origin to the Arab traders of the medieval period and as Qudri Ismail pointed out "it served the hegemonic interest of the elite."[56] In fact not more than 30% of the Muslims were involved in trade and commerce. According to 1901 Census only 21.6% of the Muslims were engaged in commerce and more than 35.5% were employed in agriculture. Contrary to the widespread belief that Muslims were traders, Denham in his report Ceylon at the Census of 1911 says that "Ceylon Moors for the most part are small farmers cultivating their own land."[57]

Vijaya Samaraweera tries to focus on "the inherent conservativeness of the Muslims" for their unwillingness to enter into modern education system.[58] There is a racial element in this observation. I do not think that any community is inherently conservative. The term 'conservative' is itself a relative term that is applicable only in a comparative scale. For the British and the Christian missionaries all the Sri Lankan communities, Buddhist, Hindus and Muslims were conservative and backward. How were the European communities before the 15th or 16th century? Were they 'inherently conservatives' bound to the domination of the Church or potentially progressive? Conservativeness of a community is mostly determined by the historical conditions of a particular period. Nothing is static and everything is changing rapidly or slowly, determined by the historical forces in operation.

As we have noted earlier, during the Portuguese and Dutch periods most of the Sri Lankan Muslims were compelled to retreat to the interior villages from the coastal towns and fort cities where they were heavily concentrated, and settled in seclusion with minimal interaction with the outside world, although some of them served the Portuguese and Dutch for their survival.[59] As Azeez puts it with some exaggeration, focusing on the influential section:

"The Muslims who often in the previous periods had been the unofficial ambassadors of Ceylon in foreign

countries, found themselves compelled to lead a kind of underground existence – their foreign contacts severed, their political influence diminished, their economic contribution lessened, and their cultural progress retarded. During the most part of the period of isolation, which lasted nearly three centuries the Muslim of Ceylon were out of touch even with their nearest neighbours, the Mussalmans of the sub-continent of India."[60]

This cultural and social isolation made the Muslims more backward till the beginning of the British period. It took relatively a longer period for the Muslims to come out from their cultural seclusion to adapt to the modern educational and social system than the other communities.

An important aspect, most of the writers on Sri Lankan Muslims have not focused, is the widespread poverty among Muslims. Usually the Muslims were constructed as wealthy merchants. This might have given an ego satisfaction to the upper class Muslim elite, but it was a misconception, an illusion. In fact, not more than 5% of the Muslims are such a wealthy group. As any other community in this country, more than 80% of the Muslims are not wealthy, and more than half of them can be grouped as poor. The poverty among the Muslims can be seen in the month of Ramzan every year and outside the Mosques on Fridays. The late 19th century was not better than the present; definitely it would have been worse than the present. Poverty could be one of the main causes for the reluctance of the Muslims in participating in the modern education system. Poverty and backwardness in education always go together. It was noted in the Indian context too. According to Hafeez Malik (1980), 'discouraging Muslim participation in college and university education was a result of widespread poverty among the Muslims rather than religious prejudice.'[61]

Whatever the reasons for the backwardness, Siddi Lebbe and his companions tried to make a breakthrough in the education of Sri Lankan Muslims opening separate schools for them, following

the model of Seyed Ahamed Khan in India and the Buddhist and Hindu revivalists in Sri Lanka. 'Giving modern education in a religious environment' was the common feature of their ideology and this was a kind of mixture of tradition and modernity.

Siddi Lebbe and his companions got moral and intellectual support, and community feeling was deepened with the arrival of the Egyptian exiles on the 10th of January 1883. Arabi Pasha was the leading figure among the exiles. Mohamed Samy Baroudi (1839 – 1904), the revolutionary national poet, who was the War minister and later the Prime minister of Egypt during the revolt, and Mahmoud Fahmy, an engineer and an economist, who wrote a four-volume book on history during his exile, were the other prominent members of the seven chief exiles. Most of them were in their early forties, and they arrived with their family members, altogether 54 in number. They were well received by the local Muslims. A large number of them gathered at the Colombo Jetty to receive the exiles. "They gathered in large numbers on either side of the road, from the Jetty to the barracks, a distance of nearly a quarter mile."[62] At that time there were around thirty two thousand Muslims living in Colombo. They gave the exiles a reception in Colombo and Siddi Lebbe made the welcome speech.

Though the exiles did not participate in the local politics, as they were expected to, they, especially Arabi Pasha, intellectually inspired the local Muslims and involved in community development activities. As Samaraweera points out, the 'inspirational leadership of Arabi was one of the contributing factor to the establishment of the first Muslim school – Al Madurasathul Khiriyathul Islamiya" in Colombo in November 1884, nearly two years after his arrival.[63]

Siddi Lebbe had developed a close contact and friendship with Arabi Pasha and requested him to use his influence to convince the Muslim elite and get their support for his educational activities. Muslim Nesan reported his meeting with Arabi Pasha and his following request.

"The Muslims in this country neglect education while the other communities progress in education and other reform day by day. I publish a journal for this purpose with the help of *ulamaas* and educationalists. Although we insist the importance of education in our journal we couldn't get immediate response from the people. Lots of important people would come to meet you, and if you speak to them about the important of education they will be convinced."[64]

Arabi Pasha himself was interested in English education and requested the Governor to provide good English education facilities to the children of the exiles. According to Arthur C. Dep "since there were no English boarding schools, the Government allowed the sons of the exiles to occupy five of the Normal Schools, whose principal was Mr. Hill. They were allowed these free of rent for the time being. The boys came under the care of Mr. James. The two sons of Abdel Aal attended Girton School, Maradana, Colombo. The girls attended English Christian schools...after the exiles shifted to Kandy the sons of Arabi and Toulba attended Kings Wood College."[65]

The Egyptian exiles were in Sri Lanka for nearly two decades. Arabi Pasha departed to Egypt on 18th of September 1901 at the age of 61 "to die in his dear home land and that his bones be buried in peace."[66] But the two decades were very important period in the development of ethnic consciousness among the Sri Lankan Muslims. Arabi Pasha's impact can be summarized in the words of Azeez as follows:

"Till his departure in 1901 Arabi Pasha was an adopted and highly esteemed member of Muslim society in Colombo and later in Kandy. His company was eagerly sought after by the elite of the community who befriended him and feted him to an extent unknown before and after. The red fez or tarboosh and the European trousers became very popular among them. And to him the land of

temporary exile became the land of external charm. By his advice and admonitions, he began to exert such an influence on the life of the community that in the correspondence column of the local "Examiner" it was feelingly alleged that the rebel was being accorded the treatment befitting royalty while a weak Government was silently tolerating with loss of dignity this manifestation of disloyalty, on the part of an important section of Ceylon's subjects."[67]

But for Siddi Lebbe "Arabi Pasha was no ordinary rebel but a national hero" and "he was vigorously defended against those in Ceylon, who were more loyal than the king." Arabi Pasha was given 'special prominence' in Muslim Nesan.[68]

The first outcome of the collaboration of Siddi lebbe and Arabi Pasha was Al Mathrasathul Khairiyyathul Islamiya, the first Muslim English school started in November 1884 in Colombo, but unfortunately it could not survive because of the lack of patronage from the community and the internal conflict among them.

1891 was an important year in the history of Muslim education in Sri Lanka, an individual effort was transformed into a collective effort and the Muslim Educational Society was established in that year by the joint efforts of Siddi Lebbe, Arabi Pasha, Wappichi Maraikar and I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, a young and promising intellectual who was assisting Siddi Lebbe in editing his Muslim Nesan. The Society worked hard to establish a new school for Muslims in Colombo and they succeeded in establishing Al Madrasathul Zahira in August 1892 near the Maradana Mosque in Colombo. The name of the school was specially chosen by Arabi himself. The inauguration meeting was held in the newly built school hall on 22 August 1892 and Arabi Pasha presided over the meeting. "He gave his prayers and blessings for the future of this institution."[69] The Colonial Secretary had sent a 'very encouraging' message that was read at the meeting and at the end of the meeting several people donated generously to the school.[70] The school was registered in 1894 as a Government Assisted School under the name of Maradana

Mohammedan Boy's School with Wappichi Maraikkar as the manager. "The number of students enrolled was 35 with an average of attendance of 25"[71]

In subsequent years more schools were established or attempted to be established in Colombo, Kandy, Gampola, Kurunegala, Badulla, Galle and Matara for Muslim boys as well as girls. Siddi Lebbe personally initiated most of them and it was reported in the issues of the Muslim Nesan during that period. Unlike Seyed Ahamed Khan, Siddi Lebbe was interested in female education from the beginning. In 1891 he started a school for Muslim girls in Kandy with his sister Muthu Nachiya as the head teacher and his wife as its manager and he also appointed two Burgher ladies as assistants. As Governor Havelock and Lady Havelock were interested in Muslim female education, Siddi Lebbe met the Governor on 6th of January 1892 by his invitation to discuss the matter and he opened two more girls' schools in Kandy at the same year with the assistance of the Government. A total number of 146 students were studying at these three schools and Tamil, English, arithmetic, sewing and the Qur'an were taught there.[72]

In 1891 Siddi Lebbe initiated a Muslim girls' school in Kurunegala with the help of Abdul Careem, the Post master, who was the manager and his daughter was the head teacher.[73] Governor Havelock visited this school in 1892 and his speech at the reception, expressing his satisfaction was reported in the Muslim Nesan on 6.4.1892. Two more girls' schools were opened in Galle and Matara in 1891, and 121 girls were enrolled in Galle and 112 in Matara.

Although, a number of Muslim schools were opened and the student population was increased at the beginning, the educational progress of the Muslims was not satisfactory when compared with other communities. After the initial enthusiasm a number of schools were closed or defunct. For example the following statistics for government assisted Muslim schools and the student population from 1895 to 1915 clearly reveals this.[74]

	Total GAS	Muslim Schools	Total Students	Muslim Students	%
1895	1096	04	90229	377	0.4
1905	1582	07	156040	736	0.4
1915	2062	07	237420	7205	0.3

However, more Muslim students attended the other GA non-Muslim schools. The following statistics for the years 1891 to 1893 show that during these three years less number of Muslim students studied English language than Tamil.

	Tamil	English	Total
1891	1157	358	1515
1892	1472	391	1863
1893	1179	518	1679

The Government school statistics also show that less number of Muslim students studied English than Tamil in the same years.

	Tamil	English	Total
1891	710	39	749
1892	980	30	938
1893	907	24	931

At the beginning of the 20th century the educational progress of the Muslims was not satisfactory. Higher education among the Muslims was almost nil. As Mahroof pointed out, "among 90 senior boys who passed the Cambridge Examination in 1902 only one was a Muslim; among 116 junior boys in the Examination in the same year there were only 2 Muslims. There were no Muslim girls either in the senior or junior division."[75]

English literacy rate among the Muslims even in 1911 was much lower than in the other communities: Ceylon Moors 1.7%, Ceylon Tamil 4.9% and low country Sinhalese 3.5%.

Although the Muslim educated elite campaigned for modern English education from the late 19th century, the Muslims were more reluctant in comparison to the other communities. Till the 1920s the situation did not change drastically. For example, when T.B. Jayah assumed office as the principal of Colombo Zahira College in 1921 after 30 years of its inception by Siddi Lebbe, there were only 59 students and 6 teachers, no good furniture, and only one building that was used by unruly elements by nights.[76]

As Samaraweera pointed out, "considerable number of Muslim children remained outside the formal educational structure. The Muslim schools were mostly established in the urban and semi-urban areas, where the wealth of the community was accumulated, and it is an indictment on the Muslim educationalists that not a single school was established during the period in the Eastern Province, which had the largest concentration of the Muslims in the Island."[77]

The story of the Eastern Province was different. Their self sufficient feudal social system was basically intact and they had to wait to come of age and to enter into the competitive capitalist socio-political system and to ethnically mobilize till the beginning of 1930s, when the electoral politics started with the introduction of the Donoughmore constitution, until then the Muslims and the Tamils of the East existed harmoniously.

Seeking Political Representation and Disowning Linguistic Identity

There was a strong political motivation for disowning linguistic identity by the Muslim elite in the late 19th century and after. Since Muslims were emerging as a politically conscious minority, they had to safeguard their socio-political interests also from the Tamils who were not only numerically larger, but also a socially powerful minority in this country. The Sri Lankan Muslim elite of the mercantile sector had also to compete with the Indian Muslims (the Coast Moors) in trade and commerce. These facts led the Sri Lankan Muslim elite to seek a strong separate identity for them, which could totally differentiate them from the Tamils apart from the fact that

Muslims were also linguistically Tamils and also from the Indian Muslims although they are also Muslims.

The British colonial policy of governance was one of the important factors that contributed in ethnicizing the Sri Lankan society in the late 19th century and after. The British unified the Sri Lankan territory after capturing the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 and set up Executive and Legislative councils to govern the country in 1833 following the recommendations of the Commission of Colebrook and Cameron. The Executive Council was the sole authority of administration headed by the Governor. The Legislative Council was formed with 9 official and 6 unofficial members to formulate legislations and to advice the Government. The unofficial members representing different ethnic groups, namely Europeans, Sinhalese, Tamils and Burghers were appointed by the Governor. Three members represented the Europeans and one member for each of the other groups. This was the first time the Sri Lankan communities were politically divided into ethnic groups. The British were notorious for their policy of 'divide and rule' and it tremendously contributed to the polarization of Sri Lankan society throughout British rule in this country.

The Sinhala representative was appointed from the low-country, upper class, *govigama* Christian families and there was no separate representative for Kandyan Sinhalese till 1889. The Tamil member appointed from the educated Colombo Tamil elite represented all Tamil speaking communities including the Muslims. The government for the first time made some changes in the Legislative Council in 1889 to accommodate the aspirations of the Kandyan Sinhalese and the Muslims who were agitating for separate representations.

In the late 19th century Muslim revivalists also sought political representation in the Legislative Council. There was a strong awareness among them about this issue in the 1880s and many Muslims from different parts of the country requested Sir Arthur Gordon, the Governor, to appoint a Muslim member to the Legislature. Siddi Lebbe reported such instances in Muslim Nesan and he also expressed his views. Kandy Muslims petitioned the Governor with 200 signatures to appoint a Muslim member to the Council on 18th July 1885. Badulla Muslims submitted a petition requesting him to appoint a member from the Muslim community to the Council, when he visited Badulla in February 1886. The Muslim Nesan published a letter to the editor on 8th September stating that "there are two hundred thousands of Muslims in this country. But they do not have representation in the Legislative Council, while the Burgers and the coffee planters, who are lesser in number, have representation." When the Muslim Marriage Registration Ordinance was discussed in the Legislature, a writer from Nawalapitiya wrote to the Muslim Nesan in December 1885 expressing his anxiety that "an important issue of the Muslims is discussed in a Council where there is no Muslim member. Muslims have lots of problems. To solve these problems first a Muslim member should be appointed to the Legislature and laws regarding Islamic issues should be enacted only after consulting him."[78]

The Muslim Nesan published a news item, that the Government was contemplating to appoint a Muslim member to the Legislative council and Siddi Lebbe expressed his views on the suitability of the would be appointee. According to him the member would be acceptable to the entire Muslim community but not merely to the Colombo Muslims and the member should be a qualified person and should have the capacity to work for the betterment of the Muslim community.[79]

Siddi Lebbe might have had an eye on this post, although he did not openly canvass for it. However, he published a letter by one Mahmud Sulaimalebbe in Muslim Nesan in November 1884 requesting the Colombo Muslims to work for Siddi Lebbe to be appointed to the Legislature, since he was dedicated to the Muslim cause and he was the proper person to safeguard the Muslim rights under the non-Muslim Government.[80]

Siddi Lebbe was also criticized by his rival group who accused that he had come to Colombo to settle in 1884 with the intention of getting appointed to the Legislature. They even published a journal called Sarvajana Nesan (The friend of all people) in 1886 as a rival to Muslim Nesan mainly to work against Siddi Lebbe.[81]

Although Siddi Lebbe was the most suitable candidate to the Legislative Council at that time, the Government appointed M. C. Abdul Rahman (1829-1899) as the first Muslim member to the Legislature in 1889. Abdul Rahman's father Mohamed Cassim Bhoy was a trader from Surat, India. Abdul Rahman "had an important business network in the import and export work, with an office in Colombo. He owned several cargo ships including the *Rahmaniya*, and lived in style in Icicle Hall, kollupitiya. He was also the first Muslim to be appointed to the Colombo Municipal Council (1876-79) and later to be unofficial Municipal magistrate. Clearly, the British, when looking for qualified Muslims to nominate for political representation of the community, could have chosen between professional like Siddi Lebbe and successful traders such as Abdul Rahman; they chose the latter who was considered more 'reliable.' He held the seat from 1889 until 1898, during which period he spoke seldom in the legislature."[82]

It was in this context that, when Muslims were seeking separate political representation to the Legislative Council, Ponnambalam Ramanathan who was representing the Tamil community, including the Muslims in the legislature, made an explosive comment in 1885 when he was speaking on the Muslim Marriage Registration Ordinance, that the Muslims were ethnologically Tamils, who were converted to Islam.

Till then the Muslim elite were tracing their origin to the Arab traders. They strongly believed that they were the descendants of the Arab traders who had commercial contact with Sri Lanka even before the advent of Islam. Sir Alexander Johnston, who was the chief Justice of Ceylon in the early 19th century, recorded the tradition that prevailed among the Muslims about their origin that,

they were the descendants of Arabs specifically from the glorious Hashemite clan of Prophet Mohamed. According to him the tradition goes like this. "A portion of those Arabs of the house of Hashim who were driven from Arabia in the early part of the eighth century by the tyranny of the Caliph Abd-al Malek Bin Merwan, and who, proceeding from Euphrates southward, made settlements in the Concan, in the southern parts of the peninsula of India, on the Island of Ceylon and at Malacca. The division of them which came to Ceylon formed eight considerable settlements along the north-east, north and western coasts of the Island, viz, one at Trincomalee, one at Jaffna, one at Mantota and Mannar, one at Coodramale, one at Puttalam, one at Colombo, one at Barbaryn and one at Point – de – Galle."[83]

Ramanathan's rejection of this claim and his assertion that the Muslims were Tamil converts provoked the Muslim elite and Siddi Lebbe immediately responded to it. He wrote a series of articles on the history of Sri Lankan Muslims in the Muslim Nesan from September 1885. However, Ramanathan proceeded with his thesis to present a comprehensive paper on "the Ethnology of the "Moors" of Ceylon" at the Royal Asiatic Society. He read his paper on 26th April 1888 three years after his comments at the Legislature. His paper had a tremendous negative impact on the Sri Lankan Muslim mind and pushed them to overtly reject their linguistic identity. The main arguments of Ramanathan are briefly presented in the following few pages.

He begins his paper with the description of the Muslims as follows:

"That section of our community which passes principally among our European settlers by the name of "Moors" number, according to the last census, about 185,000 souls. They are all Mohammedans. In the Sinhalese districts they occupy themselves with petty trade of all kinds, as peddlers and boutique (small shop) keepers. The poorer classes are mostly boatmen, fishermen, and coolies. In the

Tamil provinces they pursue agriculture and fishing. In physique and features they closely resemble the Tamils, and as to the language they speak, it is Tamil even in purely Sinhalese districts."[84]

Here it cannot be unnoticed that Ramanathan carefully excludes the affluent section of the Muslim community that is the upper class elite with whom Ramanathan was in confrontation.

With this brief description, Ramanathan goes on to discuss the nationality of this community and tries to prove that they are not a separate nationality but Tamils converted to Islam. He argued that the separate categorization of "Moors" as a distinct race by the British was a mistake derived from the Portuguese and the Dutch. According to him "when the Portuguese navigated the eastern seas in the fifteenth century, and found Muhammedans along the western shores of India and Ceylon, they gave the name of *Moros*, which in English is "Moors." In India that name is no longer used to denote Muhammedans; but in Ceylon we continue to use it in a loose way."[85] He also says that "the Portuguese conquerors applied this term to this community, not because that was the name it went by in its own circle or among its naighbours, but because, like the Moors of North Africa, its religion was Muhammedan,"[86] and he added that "the Dutch also used this term to denote the community without comprehending its lingual and social characteristics", and the British also used it "without the leisure for entering upon ethnological question" and the first census held in 1824 was "necessarily erroneous in classification." The second and third census held, respectively, in 1871 and 1881 retained the word Moors "evidently because the commissioners and other European officials have lacked the time or the opportunity for studying that community."[87]

For Ramanathan, the official classification of the Muslims as a separate ethnic group in the name of Moors was totally erroneous because the colonial rulers did not have time, leisure and opportunity to study the ethnology of the community. It implies that Ramanathan had the leisure and opportunity to correct this error. It is true that

before the arrival of the Europeans the Muslims of Sri Lanka were not known as 'Moors' and they did not know even the word 'Moor'. It was an invention of colonialism and the term became an inherent part of the colonial discourse in Sri Lanka. Since the term became official currency during British rule, the Muslim elite accepted it as a label of their identity as a separate community without looking into its history. The fact is that the Muslims were recognized as a separate social group by the Sinhalese rulers before colonization and by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British afterwards. Ramanathan wanted to nullify this category only because of political motivation other than academic interest. For the same reason the Muslim elite vehemently rejected the Ramanathan's thesis of linguistic identity and sought difference in religious identity.

Ramanathan takes language as the primary marker of nationality as it was currency among the scholars in Europe during the 19th century as we have noted in the first chapter, and quotes from Webster, Max Muller and Sir William Hunter[88] and he says "if therefore we take language as the test for nationality, the Moors of Ceylon, who speak as their vernacular the Tamil, must be adjudged Tamils"[89] and he asserts that:

" [t]he vernacular language of the Moors is, as I have said, Tamil, even in purely Sinhalese districts. What diversities of creed, custom, and facial features prevail among the low-country Sinhalese and the Kandyan Sinhalese, between Tamils of the Brahmin or Vellala castes and of Paraya caste! And yet do they not pass respectively as Sinhalese and Tamils, for the simple reason that they speak as their mother-tongue these languages? Language in Oriental countries is considered the most important part of nationality, outweighing differences of religion, institution and physical characteristics. Otherwise each caste would pass for a race. Dr. Freeman's contention, that "community of language is not only presumptive evidence of the community of blood, but is also part of something

which for *practical purposes is the same as community of blood*" ought to apply to the case of the Ceylon Moors."[90]

Ramanathan argues that "the Arab exiles were, or were not, accompanied by their wives and daughters. If they were so accompanied and settled with them in purely Sinhalese districts like Kalutara and Galle, why did they abandon both the Arabic and Sinhalese and take to the Tamil? Or, if they come to Ceylon without their women and took Sinhalese wives why has the same survival of the Tamil language occurred? It is impossible to accept this version of wholesale Arab colonization. It is too elaborate and inexplicable."[91]

He also argues that, if the Ceylon Moors were the descendents of those Arabs of the house of Hashim "they would all be Seyyids – which they are not, and do not profess to be, being only Sunnis of Shafai sect" and it shows "the crowning absurdity" of their tradition.[92]

Ramanathan also tries to prove that historically too the Moors were Tamil converts. For Ramanathan, although, there was some distinction between the Ceylon Moors and Coast Moors, they shared a common origin. According to him the vast majority of the Muslims in North India and the Mapillas of Kerala were converts of Hindus "without an appreciable admixture of blood with that of the foreigners."[93] He focuses on the Tamil speaking Muslims of Kayal-Paddanam of South India, the present Tamilnadu, to trace the origin of the Ceylon Moors disregarding their claim that they were the descendents of Arabs. He says

"Kayal-Paddanam or "the town of Kayal," which is of special interest to us because not only has it been the principal city of Lebbes, but the tradition there – and indeed in Ceylon – is, that a colony there from settled at Beruwala, near Kalutara, which is admittedly one of the earliest centers, if not very earliest one, of Islam in the Island...it appears to me that Kayal contains the keystone of the history of the Tamil Muhammadans, just as Quilon and Calicut contains

that of the Malayalam Muhammadans, The tradition in Kayal is that a few missionaries or teachers from Cairo landed there and made it their headquarters in the early part of the ninth century.... The simplicity of the new creed ....was so attractively preached that great numbers of Tamils of various castes were converted. Nagapatnam, Nagur, Atirampet, and Kilakkarai soon became other centres of proselytism."[94]

"The men of Cairo, who are said to have originally settled at Kayal, could not have been very many: including priests and laymen, the proportion which they bore to the annually increasing number of native converts must have naturally diminished in an inverse ratio.[95] It may be concluded that the Egyptians and Arabs who settled in Kayal could not have infused their blood among the converts to so great an extent as to materially alter their character...hence, it is that the Choliyas (Muslims) continue to be in paint of language, feature, physique, and social customs still Tamils in all respects except religion."[96]

According to Ramanathan the coast Moors of Ceylon belonged to this community of South Indian Mohammedans who were called Choliyas, Chonakar or Lebbes and the history of Ceylon Moors was not different from that of the Coast Moors. He rejects the tradition of Ceylon Moors recorded by Alexander Johnston that they are the descendants of Arabs and prefer the tradition mentioned by Casie Chetty that "the ancestors of the "Ceylon Moors" formed their first settlement in Kayal-Paddanam in the ninth century, and that many years afterwards, in the 402nd year of the Hijra, corresponding to A.C. 1024, a colony from that town migrated and settled at Barberin (Beruwala)."[97] After citing some evidence from Sinhala literary works he concludes that

"Beruwala had not been seized upon by Muhammadans in 1344; that the hamlet, Galle and Puttalam, which are commonly believed to have received

the earliest Muhammadan settlements, did not contain any such colonies at that period; and that though Arabs, Egyptians, Abyssinians, and other Africans may have constantly come to and go from Ceylon, as merchants, soldiers, and tourists long before the fourteenth century, comparatively few of them domiciled themselves in the Island; and that the settlement at Beruwala, which the Ceylon Muhammadans greatly admit to be the first of all their settlements took place not earlier than fourteenth century, say A. C. 1350."[98]

Ramanathan also tries to ridicule the first Muslim settlers at Beruwala describing them as follows:

"We may also safely conclude that this colony was an offshoot of Kayal Paddanam, and that the emigrants consisted largely of a rough and ready set of bold Tamil converts, determined to make themselves comfortable by methods usual among unscrupulous adventurers. Having clean shaven heads, and straggling beards, wearing a costume which was not wholly Tamil nor yet Arabic or African even in part, speaking a low Tamil interlarded with Arabic expressions; slaughtering cattle with their own hands and eating them; given to predatory habits, and practicing after their own fashion the rights and the Mohammedan faith; - they must indeed have struck the Sinhalese at first as strange peoples deserving of the epithet 'barbarians'."[99]

Ramanathan goes on to say that "it is only natural that other colonies should have gone forth from Kayal-Paddanam, and only added to the population of Beruwala, but settled at other places, such as Batticaloa, Puttalam, &c. With the advent of Europeans, communication with "the fatherland of Chonakar" (as Kayal is known) and Ceylon grew feeble, and during the time of the Dutch must have practically ceased, because the Muhammadan settlers, from their obstinate refusal to become Christians, became objects of persecution to the Hollanders, who imposed all manner of taxes and disqualifications on them. The distinction which the "Ceylon Moor" draws between himself and the "Coast Moor" (Cammankaran) is evidently the result of the cessation of intercourse this produced and continued for several decades between the mother – country and the colonies."[100]

Ramanathan's thesis can be framed briefly as follows: The Ceylon Moors and the Coast Moors were mainly Tamil converts originally from Tamil speaking South India, and the Ceylon Moors settled in Sri Lanka in the middle of the 14th century before the arrival of the Europeans and the Coast Moors were the later arrivals during the British period.

Ramanathan had two other items of evidence to prove that the Ceylon Moors were Tamil converts; one is their social customs and the other their physical features. He briefly mentions his comments on the paper on the Marriage Customs of the Moors of Ceylon read at the Royal Asiatic Society by Mr. Bawa, that all the marriage customs described by Bawa, like *srithanam, alatti, tali, kurai* and *patchoru* were borrowed from the Tamils. And on the physical features, he says that "the best marked race-characters, according to Dr. Tylor, are the colour of the skin, structure and arrangement of the hair, contour of the face, stature, and confirmation of the skull. On all those points there is, in my opinion, no appreciable differences between the average Tamil and the average Moor. If he were dressed up like a Tamil he would pass easily for a Tamil, and *vice versa.*"[101]

Summing up his arguments Ramanathan says that "as regards the nationality of "Ceylon Moors", ... we have ample reasons for concluding that they too are Tamils, - I mean the mass of them, for of course, we meet with the few families here and there - say five percent of the community, or about 5000 out of 92,500 – who bear the impress of an Arab or other foreign descent. Even the small

coterie of Ceylon Moors, who claim for themselves and their coreligionists an Arab descent, candidly admit that on the mother's side the Ceylon Moors are exclusively Tamil.... I have shown the utter worthlessness of a tradition among them that a great colony of Arabs of the house of Hasim made settlement at Beruwala and the other parts of the Island...I arrived the conclusion that the early ancestors of the 'Moors' Ceylon and Coast, were mainly Tamils on the father side, and admittedly they are exclusively on the mother side."[102]

Finally Ramanathan states that "taking (1) the language they speak at home in connection with, (2) their history, (3) their customs and (4) physical features, the proof cumulatively leads to no other conclusion than that the Moors of Ceylon are ethnologically Tamils."[103]

Ramanathan's paper, nearly three years after his speech in the Legislative Council, understandably aroused the Muslim sentiment again in a highest state and the Muslim elite reacted angrily. Siddi Lebbe's reaction appeared in the Muslim Nesan on 7th, May 1888 as a brief note. I give the translation below.

"The Muslims throughout the country are very angry and talk day and night about Mr. Ramanathan's speech at the Asiatic Society that the Sri Lankan Muslims are Tamil converts. I have received letters from various parts of the country, abusing Mr. Ramanathan and degrading the Tamils. It is useless to publish those in my paper. The editor Times has written lengthily refuting Ramanathan last week. A letter to the editor also condemned him citing some valid reasons. But it is useless in arguing through the news papers. The society will publish his lecture in a book form very soon. I also decided to read a paper in that society in his presence refuting his arguments. Then the people will judge who is correct. I don't wish to write in this paper, since I have the confidence that I can seal his mouth to prevent

him from degrading the Muslims any further. Mr. Ramanathan has noble qualities. He works hard for Sri Lankans in the legislature and we honor him very much. But, whether his bad luck or obstinacy made him speak in the legislature that the Sri Lankan Muslims are Tamil converts. Although, I refuted him with valid reasons, he obstinately tried to reinforce his ideas at the society without considering it and earned the Muslim's hate. Let him rest in his stupor of proud of his achievement. The days will come soon and he will apologize to the Muslim for his fault."[104]

Siddi Lebbe did not find time to write the paper as he wished. However, the Muslim's views got a comprehensive form with the publication of "A Criticism of Mr. Ramanathan's Ethnology of the Moors of Ceylon" later in 1907 by I.L.M. Abdul Azeez, a disciple of Siddi Lebbe and a Muslim ideologue who formed the Moors Union in 1900 and was also its founding president.

Siddi Lebbe and Azeez suspected that Ramanathan had political motivation behind his paper and Azees says that,

"His object in calling the Moors Tamils in race was to dissuade the government from appointing a Moorish member in Council, it having leaked out then that Government were contemplating to appoint such a one, and to make them understand that there was no necessity for taking such a step, as Moors did not form a distinct race .... Mr. Ramanathan approached the subject of his paper with a prejudiced mind."[105]

Commenting on Ramanathan's description of Ceylon Moors, Azeez says:

"Mr. Ramanathan has thought it is sufficient to refer to the Moors as petty traders, peddlers, boutique keepers, boat men, fishermen, agriculturists and coolies, but I think, had he been a little candid, he would have said that they included wholesale merchants, large shop keepers, planters,

and wealthy landed proprietors, and in point of wealth, they were only next to the Sinhalese among the native races of the Island. In the matter of their influence and position Mr. Ramanathan has not done justice to the Moors."[106]

It is very clear here that both Mr. Ramanathan and Abdul Azeez were expressing the competing elitist sentiments for social status and political power. For Ramanathan the Muslims were nothing but a low class group of people not eligible for political power sharing. For Azeez they were highly affluent upper class people, in wealth 'only next to the Sinhalese among the native races' and therefore, equally eligible for political power sharing.

Azeez refutes Ramanathan's claim that the separate categorization of Moors was a mistake derived from the Portuguese and the Dutch. For Azeez the Portuguese did not apply the term Moor mistakenly to the Muslims. According to him "The Portuguese had visited India before they came to Ceylon. In the western coast of India they met Mohammedans to whom they did not indiscriminately apply the term Moor, as supposed by Mr. Ramanathan, for we do not hear of the Moors or Moros of Bombay, Goa &c. To those of the Mohammedans seen by them on the south-western coast of that continent, who were called among themselves and their neighbours "Sonahar" and whom they had reason to believe as the descendents of Arabs, they applied the term. On their advent to Ceylon they found here, we are informed by a writer, a class of people who resembled in religion and other characteristics the Arab of Spain, and called them Moros or Moors."[107] Azeez accuses Ramanathan for relying on Valentyn, the Dutch historian and says that "the story of the Dutch historian was not believed even by the Dutch administrators. Had there been a little evidence to support it, the Dutch administrators, who were not friends but enemies of the Moors, would have hailed it with delight, and not only impressed it on official documents but would have bequeathed it to their political successors as an established fact, and in such a manner as to leave no chance of it being repudiated by others. To say that they had no

time to do it owing to the arrival of the English is puerile." For Azeez "it is equally childish to say that the English, too, had no leisure during a century to inquire about the ethnology of the races of Ceylon, placed under their rule by Providence. The fact is otherwise, there being evidence to prove that the origin and history of the Moors were investigated and the truth found out by the English."[108] Azeez mentions that, Alexander Johnston and James Emerson Tennent and also Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the brother of Ramanathan and the Registrar General, who was commissioned by the Government to take census of Ceylon in 1901, for his support.[109]

It is interesting to note that both Ramanathan and Azeez seek support from different historical sources to show proof of their opposing claims. History always plays a major role in determining nationality or ethnicity.

While insisting on the Arab origin of the Moors, Azeez also admits that they had a Tamil connection. He says that, "of the Arab settlers some had their Arabian wives with them and others converted and married Tamil women as it was with the Tamils, who were then called Malabars, that the Arabs came in contact. The entire cessation of intercourse with their own country, made the Arabs to adapt themselves to their surroundings, and they gradually adopted the language, customs, habits and manners of the people (Tamils) amongst whom they had settled."[110] He also says the reason why the Arabs settled among the Tamil and not among Sinhalese, that "may appear strange to some for Ceylon was the country of the latter race" and he tries to explain that 'those Arabs were traders, and, hence, it was natural that they should come in contact with the traders of this country. Our Sinhalese friends were not traders, and they hated commerce and gave themselves up to agricultural and other pursuits" and therefore, he safely concludes that "the Arabs had not the opportunity of having intercourse with the Sinhalese" but they had with the Tamils "who were then called Malabars ... and found, in large numbers, in the seaports as well as the interior of the Island."[111]

Quoting from Tennent, Azeez says that "the Malabars were all powerful in every part of the Island at the time our ancestors were settling here; and that it was they who received the Arabs is evidenced by historical facts as well as the tradition current among the Moors themselves."[112] Azeez reiterates his point further as follows:

"what do the readers think of the intimacy which must have existed between the Arabs and Malabars, for the latter to have learned the language of the former, and been the first among the natives of Ceylon, to extend hospitality to the Arabs on their arrival here? Is there then any difficulty in believing that the Arabs, likewise, learned the language of the Malabars with whom they had business relations, and after settling among them, and ceasing intercourse with their own country, continued to speak it, with the result that their descendants have entirely forgotten the national language of their fathers, and stick to that which was borrowed by their fathers from their Malabar friends and Malabar wives? Thus came the Moors of Ceylon to speak the Tamil language."[113]

Although, Azeez couldn't reject Ramanathan's logical argument for the linguistic evidence of Moors' ethnology, his counter argument is interesting. I quote from Azeez:

"I see the force of his (Ramanathan's) argument, that the language spoken by Moors is an exponent of their nationality because, though diversities of creed, custom, and facial features prevail among the low-country and Kandian Sinhalese, and among the Tamils of high caste and low caste, yet they pass respectively as Sinhalese and Tamils for the reason that they speak as their mother tongue those languages. But what he has to consider, in the case of Moors, is whether they speak Tamil as their own national language as Tamils and Sinhalese do their respective languages, or as a borrowed one and whether there is possibility of one race borrowing the language of another, and continuing to

use it forgetting its own. Among the Vellala and Paraya caste Tamils, and among the Kandian and low country Sinhalese there is no class claiming foreign descent, hence the test of language can be applied to their cases without any paucity; but as the Moors are making such a claim not for years nor decades, but for centuries, one need pause before applying the same test to their case too."[114]

Here, Azeez admits that the Muslims also speak Tamil, but what he wanted to emphasize that, it is not their inherently native language but merely a borrowed one and the language test cannot be applied to them in determining their racial origin or ethnicity. And Azeez says in his preface that "Though there is nothing humiliating in being Tamil in race, the persistent attempt of that gentleman (Ramanathan) in attributing to the Moors an origin which they do not claim in spite of their assertion, to the contrary, is annoying if not offending."[115]

We cannot see much difference between the claims of Ramanathan and Azeez. Both accept the mixed origin of the Muslims that the Arabs married Tamil women and the present Moors are their descendants. But Ramanathan gives much importance to matrilineal decent while Azeez totally neglects the matrilineal descent and gives much importance to patrilineal descent since patriarchy was prevalent among the Arabs and the Muslims.

However, Azeez does not accept language as the primary marker of ethnicity and he rejects Max Muller's principle that "our real ancestors are those whose language we speak," on which Ramanathan based his arguments. Azeez cites the example of the Parsees of India, who were originally Persians, settled in Bombay Presidency. According to Azeez "since they settled in that country they had no intercourse with their native land, and those of them who had no wives married Hindu women, and, all began to speak the language of the land, and adopt the customs and manners of the Hindus. Their descendants are the present Parsees of India. The vernacular of these is Gujarati and Persian is no longer their language.

Are they, therefore, to be adjudged as not of Persian descent?" asks Azeez.[116]

The example of Parsees was first cited by George Wall, who was the chairman of the meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society, before which Ramanathan read his paper. Wall commented that "it would appear to me that, if we are to accept that definition (Max Muller's) in its simplicity and without any qualification, we must regard the Parsees as Indians and not as a separate nationality, because they speak the language of the people among whom they have taken up their abode .... looking into the fact of their remarkable isolation, and the distinction that there are between the Parsees and others, that it can hardly be taken as conclusive proof of their nationality that they speak the language of the people whose hospitality they received and whose country they have made their own."[117] Azeez concludes that "the case of the Parsees is parallel to that of the Moors. Hence, it is nothing but absurd to call the Moors of Ceylon Tamils because their language is Tamil."[118]

Azeez also refutes Ramanathan's contention that the Ceylon Moors and Coast Moors had a common history. For Azeez:

"The South Indian Mohammedans are partly the descendents of Arabs – traders and missionaries – and partly the progenies of the Tamil converts to Islam. Though it may be said that Arab missionaries were proselytizing Tamils in South India, that was not the case in Ceylon, where Arab missionaries were unknown, and where at no time a regular system of proselytizing the Tamils and Sinhalese to Islam was noted...Ramanathan's assertion that the ancestors of the Ceylon Moors were Tamils, who embraced Islam at Kayal and came to Beruwala is untenable, for there had been Moors in Ceylon before Kayal – Paddanam came into existence, or rather it was in a position to send colonies abroad... there is no tradition in Ceylon that the ancestors of the Ceylon Moors came from Kayal and settled at Beruwala, nor I have ever heard that such a tradition exists at Kayal."[119]

Regarding social customs Azeez's arguments were as follows:

"[A]s the Moors themselves have admitted all along that among their ancestors there were many who had married Tamil wives, whose language, habits, customs, and manners their descendents adopted in the long run. What the Parsees did in India the Moors have done in Ceylon, and it aught to be apparent to the readers how much more natural it is for the children to cherish and adopt the thoughts and habits of their mothers than their fathers. It is true that the Ceylon Moors have the customs of Stridhanam, alati, the tying of tali &c., and my explanation is that these have been borrowed by them from the Tamils; to whose race their mothers, in most cases, belonged, and among whom their fathers settled. Does the fact that these customs have been borrowed by the Moors from the Tamils prove in any degree that they are Tamils in descent and nationality?"[120]

Regarding physical features, Azeez says that "here too his argument is weak. It is true that there is, in some cases, similarities between the Tamils and Moors, on the point of the colour of the skin, structure and the arrangement of the hair, contour of the face &c. but that is accounted for by the fact that there is a admixture of Tamil blood in those Moors, from the mothers' side...as in the case of social customs, so in the case of the physical features, the similarity between some Moors and Tamils does not conclusively prove that the former are purely Tamils in blood."[121]

After a lengthy discussion Azeez concludes that "neither the language, spoken by the Ceylon Moors, nor their history, social custom & physical features have singly or cumulatively proved that they are ethnologically Tamils."[122]

It is very obvious that as we have noted earlier too, Azeez's arguments were strongly based on patriarchal convictions that totally excludes mothers for ancestry.

Whatever the fallacies one can find in Ramanathan's and Azeez' arguments, it is clear that there was a strong political motivation behind them. Ramanathan wanted to establish that the Muslims were not a separate ethnic community but were Tamils to keep them under one political umbrella. As a reaction to it, the Muslim elite did not want to be identified themselves as Tamils even though they speak Tamil as their primary language, and although, they accepted that on the mothers' side they had Tamil affinity, because of some obvious socio-political reasons.

As said earlier, ethnic identity is not given by others or inherently natural to a community but it is constructed by the community for itself to fulfill its socio-economic and political needs in a given historical and socio-political condition. The Sri Lankan Muslim community rejected linguistic identity in favour of religious identity because they wanted to differentiate themselves from the Tamils to safeguard their own economic and political interests.

Unfortunately the Tamil nationalist leadership did not appreciate this fact then and now. In the contemporary Sri Lankan political context the Tamil separatist movements especially the LTTE repeats the Ramanathan thesis to include the Muslims under their political umbrella and try to call them as Islamiya Tamilar. After more than hundred years of consolidation of the Muslim identity, no Muslim accepts this label. During the period from 1950s to early 1970s the Federal Party and the TULF under the leadership of S.J.V. Chelvanayagam used rather an ethnically neutral term Thamil Peesum Makkal (Tamil speaking People) to include the Muslims too under their political leadership. Sri Lankan Muslims, especially the North-East Muslims, did not see any thing wrong in this category, and at least a considerable section of the North-East Muslims participated in politics under their leadership since, the term *Tamil speaking people* as a linguistic category includes the Muslims, but, the term *Tamils* as an ethnic category excludes them.

Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and the Muslim Identity

Ethnic consciousness developed among Muslims also in response to the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and a hostility towards them that reached its peak between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This hostility developed mainly because of the competition in trade and commerce in the urban areas.

Until the arrival of the British, the Sinhala-Muslim relationship was good and there was mutual trust and cooperation. The Muslims were also recruited to the high posts and 'structurally assimilated' into the society.[123] However, after the arrival of the British the situation changed. As Deveraja points out "the good relationship that had prevailed over a thousand years deteriorated into one of competition, suspicion and ill will. This was the result of the policy of divide and rule and communal politics which the British initiated from 1796 onwards."[124]

Unlike the Portuguese and the Dutch who suppressed the Muslims, the British granted them some concessions to win over their loyalty. They abolished the poll tax imposed by the Dutch on the Muslims and the Muslims began to accumulate capital by buying land and property in Colombo and other urban areas. The British also implemented the Muslim personal law in 1806 which was earlier introduced by the Dutch. After the British captured the Kandian Kingdom some influential Muslims cooperated with them. One Muslim was appointed to one of the highest administrative posts, which was considered as an affront to the Sinhala aristocratic families who had hitherto enjoyed the position. The person was Hajji, an influential Muslim who was appointed as the *tavalam madige muhandiram* to the Vellassa area. There was widespread resentment against this appointment and the British received several petitions against Hajji *Muhandiram*. However, the British authorities defended his appointment. But the Sinhala aristocrats did not accept Hajji *Muhandiram*, and that was one of the causes for the Kandyan rebellion that took place in 1817 against the British, mainly in the areas of Uva and Vellassa. Hajji Muhandiram was abducted and killed

during the upheaval.[125] Because the Muslims were loyal to the British and collaborated with them during the upheaval, the British wanted to safeguard the interests of the Muslims and a proclamation, favorable to Muslims, was issued on the 2nd of March 1818 by the Secretary, Kandyan Provinces. According to this proclamation, within the Districts of Kandyan Provinces " it shall not be lawful for any Kandyan Chief to exercise any jurisdiction whatever over the Moor men of this country; and the civil and the criminal justice shall in future, in all cases where a Moor man is a party, be impartially administered to them by British official ....any Moor men who may suffer in his person, or, property by his adherence to the British Government, shall receive the fullest compensation as the nature of the injury will admit of"

This proclamation clearly shows the divide and rule policy of the British. They wanted to keep the Muslims as their loyal and to alienate them from the Sinhalese in order to handle the rebellious Sinhala Chieftains with their help. As Devaraja points out "the proclamation had a disruptive effect on Sinhala-Muslim relation .... the British Government ensured that the Muslims would henceforth look up to the new rulers as their saviors and at the same time disturbed the traditional interdependence that prevailed between the two communities."[127]

During the 19th century, new economic channels were opened for all the indigenous ethnic groups as well as the foreign trading communities for accumulation of wealth. Muslims were also competing in the economic sector from the early 19th century which gradually led to ethnic hostilities. Ameer Ali's (1986) concluding remarks, after giving a detailed account of the Muslim participation in the export sector is relevant here. He says:

"Between 1800 and 1915, the export sector of Sri Lanka underwent a radical change marked by the advent of the plantation economy in the 1840s. The Muslim community participated actively in the export sector both before and after the transition. The extent of their

participation and the manner in which they did varied, depending partly on the political and the administrative rules governing the various export items, partly on the economic profitability promised by the different articles, and partly on the religious values that generally governed the Muslim life. Overall theirs was an enterprising contribution to the 19th century economic development of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, there were problems confronting the community which arose partly from competition from foreigners and partly from the local reaction to the Muslim economic dominance. These problems kept on adding to undermine the image of the Muslims which eventually culminated in the Sinhalese-Muslims racial riots of 1915."[128]

Kumari Jayawardena (1984, 1990) also gives some details about the situation in trade in the late 19th century. According to her, by 1880, the Pettah trade was dominated by 86 Chetty and 64 Muslim firms and at the beginning of the 20th the century the external trade (export and import) was dominated by seven leading Borah firms. The retail trade was also dominated largely by Muslims especially the Coast Moors in the urban as well as in the rural areas.

Understandably the emerging Sinhala mercantile class faced severe competition from the minority communities especially from the Muslims. Devaraja points out that "the animosity of the Sinhala small retail traders against this foreign domination of the Island's trade was directed mainly against the Coast Moors who had established their little shops, or boutiques, not only in the suburbs but also in the remote villages where they came in contact with the poor section of the Sinhala society."[129]

The Sinhala Buddhist nationalists, who had a strong support of the Sinhala mercantile capitalists started to agitate against the Muslims from the late 19th century. K. M. De Silva points out that "the Sinhala traders (mainly low-country Sinhalese) had no compunctions about exploiting religious and racial sentiments to the detriment of their well established rivals, since (they) were an

influential group within the Buddhist movement, religious sentiment often given sharp ideological focus and a cloak of respectability to sordid commercial rivalry."[130] But, very often this commercial rivalry was expressed removing the "cloak of respectability" and with overt racial tone. For example, in 1915, just before the communal riots against Muslims began, Anagarika Dharmapala the veteran Buddhist revivalist leader wrote this:

> "The Mohammaden, an alien people by Shylockian method, became prosperous like the Jews. The Sinhalese sons of soil, whose ancestors for 2358 years had shed rivers of blood to keep the country free from alien invaders.... are in the eyes of the British only vagabonds... The alien South Indian Mohammaden comes to Ceylon sees the neglected villager without any experience in trade... and the result is that the Mohammedan thrives and the son of the soil goes to the wall."[131]

Anagarika Dharmapala had developed a hostile ideology towards Islam and Muslims. If we go through his speeches and essays we find numerous negative references on Muslims. He was unreasonably convinced that the Muslims were responsible for the elimination of Buddhism in India, its birth place. I give one quotation from Dharmapala as an example:

> "Superstition again took hold of the thought, and in an evil hour the Mohammedan conquerors entered India. The vestiges of Buddhism were destroyed by this inhuman, barbarous race. Thousands of Bhikkhus were killed, temples were destroyed, libraries were burned and Buddhism died in India."[132]

This animosity due to the competition in the economy was the main reason for the anti Muslim riots in 1915. This was one of the major and well documented incidents of communal violence in modern Sri Lanka.

The immediate cause of the riots was a religious controversy between the Coast Moors and the Buddhists over an *Esala perahera*, an annual religious practice of the Buddhists in Gampola, an ancient town in the Central Province, where the Sinhalese and the Muslims co-existed for centuries. The controversy started in 1907 when the Coast Moors for the first time objected to the *perahera* passing, with the noise of music and drum, their recently built Mosque. The police and the Government Agent had to be involved in that issue each year after 1907, but both parties were not agreeable to a compromise. In 1912, the Basnayake Nilame of the Wallahagoda Devala, one of the parties of the controversy, filed a case against the Attorney General of Ceylon with regarding to this issue at the District Court, Kandy and the Court gave the verdict on 4th of July 1914 in favour of the Dewala. The Attorney General appealed to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court reversed the District Court's judgment on 2nd February 1915. The judgment was considered a defeat to the Buddhists and aroused island wide anti-Muslim sentiment among the Sinhalese. It was also considered a breach of Kandyan Convention signed between the British and the Kandyan chieftains exactly a century ago in March 1815. The Sinhala newspapers 'Sinhala Bauddhaya' and 'Sinhala Jathiya', the mouth-pieces of the Sinhala nationalists propagated a strong anti-Muslim sentiment, arousing Sinhala nationalist feelings.[133]

The riots erupted first not in Gampola but in Kandy at midnight on 28th of May 1915, when the police blocked the Wesak perahera near the Hanafi Mosque at Castle Street. Kandy was in turmoil for three days. A few died, seven mosques were damaged and Muslims' shops were looted. Subsequently the riots spread to the entire Central Province and Colombo, Kurunagala, Baduula and all over Sri Lanka except the Northern and the Eastern Provinces and also the North Central Province.

This was the first major communal riot in the history of modern Sri Lanka. It lasted for more than two weeks and the Government had to proclaim Martial Law to suppress the riots. The Muslims were severely affected by the riots. According to a Government report 25 Muslims were killed, 189 were wounded and 4 women

were raped. 4075 shops were looted, 350 were burnt to the ground and 103 mosques were destroyed or damaged.[134] The estimated damages to the properties of the Muslims during the riots was Rs. 5,527,745 of which 58%, that is Rs. 3,195,271 was in the Western Province, reveals that Colombo was severely affected.[135]

Most of the writers writing on the riots put the blame on the Coast Moors as the main cause of the riots and the main target of the rioters. The Coast Moor trader was painted as an extreme exploiter and plunderer of the poor village Sinhalese. According to Devaraja "the Coast Moors have been accused of exploiting the poor by readily extending credit and selling at higher prices .... the Coast Moor was again accused of profiteering."[136]

K. M. de Silva writes that "the ubiquitous activities of Coast Moors in retail trading brought them in contact with the people of their most indigent levels – they were reputed to be readier than their competitors to extend credit, but they also sold at higher price ... The Coast Moors were not only tenacious in the protection of their trading interests, but they were also more vociferous than indigenous Muslims community in dogged and truculent assertion of their civic right"[137]

Wimalaratne writes that "The role of the Coast Moors as pawn-brokers and money lenders in particular had given rise to considerable resentment and they were viewed as unscrupulous exploiters of Sinhalese villager and the urban dweller alike."[138]

Shukri writs: "Until very recent times they remained birds of passage, with no abiding interest in this land and her people. They had been here for a considerably longer period than those small North Indian communities, yet they never thought of making this island their permanent home. Ethnocentric bias motivated them to maintain a group solidarity amongst themselves, and they tended to remain aloof socially not only from the Sinhala community, but to a considerable extant even from the Moors of this land. Only religion bound them to the Muslims and no more.

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This alienation and estrangement led to irresponsible and impudent social behaviour culminating in the riots of 1915."[139]

He further admittedly quotes that, "the Coast Moors have always been unpopular in Ceylon. Like the Jews in Europe," whom says Davy, "in some respects they resemble." 'They live scattered among people, aloof and alien, they incur from the permanent population the same feeling that was aroused by the Jews of Europe in the middle ages," thus records Mr. E.B. Denham of the Ceylon Civil Service in his Censes Report for 1911."[140]

Ameer Ali also writes the same:

"The so called Indian Coast Moor was a bird of passage whose main objective was to maximize his economic fortune before leaving for the motherland to retire in comfort. The fundamental cause of the 1915 riots was the economic exploits of this Indian community, which was accused of impoverishing the Sinhalese villager. Yet, the local Muslims were urged by some Muslim leaders to lend support to the Indians because of the religious bond. I.L.M. Abdul Azeez through his *Muslim Guardian* was in the forefront of this campaign. As a result, even the local Muslims came under attack from the Sinhalese. They lost life and property during the violence of 1915."[141]

This negative image of the Coast Moors is derived from the construction of the late 19th century Sinhala Buddhist nationalists like Anagarika Dharmapala and Piyadasa Sirisena, which excludes the other traders, especially the Sinhala traders and implicitly vindicates them from such allegations of exploitation and profit making. This is the image of the Muslim trader that prevails in the Sinhalese mind to the present irrespective of Coast or Ceylon Moors. A few years back Muslims protested against the denigrating portrayal of the Muslims in some recent tele-dramas.

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In fact, irrespective of ethnic groups, the mercantile class of all communities depends on profit and thrives on making more profit. Trading for any trading group is not a charity; they want to make money and more money, and without more profit and exploitation no trader can make money. The competition between traders of different ethnic groups manifests in ethnic hate and conflicts.

In fact, the poor Sinhala villagers were equally exploited by many in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the Moor trader was one among them. If we look at this issue impartially without ethnic prejudices, we see that more Sinhalese (the Sinhala trader, the village headman and the like) were involved in this exploitation. This was the reality. It was realistically depicted by Leonard Woolf, who was a Civil Servant in Ceylon from 1904 to 1911, in his celebrated novel *The Village in the Jungle*, a modern classic on Sri Lankan rural life, which was published 2 years before the 1915 riots against the Muslims. Below I give a relevant passage of his description:

> "Nanchohami had touched the mainspring upon which the life of the village worked – debt. The villagers lived upon debt and their debt were the main topic of their conversation. A good kurakkan crop, from two to four acres of chena, would be sufficient to support a family for a year. But no one, not even the headman, ever enjoyed the full crop which he had reaped. At the time of reaping a band of strangers from the little town of Kamburupitiya, thirty miles away, would come in to the village. Mohamadu Lebbe Ahamadu Cassim, the Moorman boutique keeper, had supplied clothes to be paid for in grain, with the hundred per cent interest, at the time of reaping; the fat Sinhalese Mudalali, Kodikarage Allis Appu, had supplied grain and curry stuffs *on the same terms*; and among a crowd of smaller men the sly-faced low-caste man, who called himself Achchige Don Andris (his real name Andrissa would have revealed his caste), who, dressed in dirty white European trousers and coat, was the agent of the tavern-keeper in Kamburupitiya, from whom the villagers had taken on credit the native sprit, made from the juice of the coconut flowers, to be drunk at the time of marriages. *The villagers neither obtained nor expected any pity from this horde.* With the reaping of the chenas came the settlement of debts. With their little greasy notebooks, full of unintelligible letters and figures, they descended upon the chenas; and after calculations, wrangling, and abuse, which lasted for hour after hour, the accounts were settled, and the strangers left the village, their carts loaded with pumpkins, sacks of grains, and not unfrequently the stalks of Indian hemp, which by Government order no man may grow or possess, for the man that smokes it becomes mad. And when the strangers gone the settlement with the headman began; for the headman, on a small scale, lent, grain *in the same terms* in times of scarcity, or when seed was wanted to sow the chenas."

> "In the end the villager carried but little grain from his chena to his hut. Very soon after the reaping of the crop he was again at the headman's door, begging for a little kurakkan to be repaid at the next harvest, or tramping the thirty miles to kamburupitiya to hang about the bazaar, until the Mudalali agreed once more, to enter his name in the greasy notebook."[142]

Here, Mohamadu Lebbe Ahamadu Cassim, the Moor trader, (his identity whether he is a Coast or Ceylon is not known), Moor is only one among the exploiters. Kodikarage Allis Appu, the Sinhalese trader, is another exploiter on equal terms. The tavern-keeper and his agent Don Andris and the headman are all Sinhalese and all exploit the poor villager on the same terms. 'The villagers neither obtained nor expected any pity from this horde.' Although there was no difference in exploitation between them, if Allis Appu, 'the son of the soil' in Dharmapala's term, wants to monopolize the exploitation, and make more money without competition, he can

easily exclude Ahamadu Cassim ethnically, accusing him as an 'alien who uses Shylockian method and became prosperous like Jews.' This was the situation in the late 19th and early 20th century and the final result was the riots against the 'Moors' in 1915. It was a culmination of continuous rivalry of the trading groups of two different ethnic communities. However the writers on the riots easily found a scapegoat in Coast Moors who were the major victims of the riots. I think it is equally amount to blame the Tamils for 1983 violence against them. Another problem in this approach is the generalization of the Coast Moors as a single culprit without considering the class composition of the group. If we look at the 1911 Census details of the Coast Moors given in Chapter 2, we see that only one tenth of them are big merchants, less than that are small level shopkeepers and traders, most of them are low income vendors, labourers and domestic servants. Money lenders, commission agents and brokers are insignificantly few. There is no record of pawn-brokers among the Coast Moors in the Census Report as mentioned by Wimalaratne in the above quotation. Nearly 15% of the Coast Moors were involved in large scale and medium scale trades. These traders were the competitors of the trading class of the Sinhalese and Ceylon Moors. Constructing an enemy on ethnic lines disregarding the class composition is always dangerous. That is happening in the ethnic conflicts everywhere. Accusing the Coast Moors as a whole for the 1915 riots unfortunately has become a cliché among many of the writers on the subject.

The harsh methods employed by the Government to suppress the riots were severely criticized by the Buddhist nationalists. During the riots the Police and the military under the Martial Law killed 63 rioters mostly Sinhalese. The total accused involved in the riots was 8,736 among them 4,497 were convicted. 412 "serious cases had been remitted the field general court martial which found 358 guilty" and received various sentences and 83 were sentenced to death and finally 34 of them were executed, and most of them (26) were convicted for murder.[143] The Government also arrested several important nationalist leaders including D.S. Senanayeke and F.R. Senanayeke.

"Some of the leading Buddhist activists, who were from the most successful Sinhala business families were killed or died in jail[144] one among was Edmund Hewavitarana, the brother of Anagarika Dharmapala, died in the jail owing to the illness.

The Government's attempt to suppress the riots further flared up anti-Muslim sentiments among the Sinhalese elite. Dharmapala "levelled a surprising burst of hate against Muslims: What the German is to the British, that the Muhammedan is to the Sinhalese ...shoot, hang, quarter, imprison or do anything to the Sinhalese but there will always be bad blood between the Moors and the Sinhalese ...a few months later the London *Daily Chronicle* received from Dharmapala an anti-Muslim diatribe and clippings listing death-sentences meted out to Buddhists in Ceylon."[145]

The Tamil leader, Ponnambalam Ramanathan who had an antipathy towards Muslims, aligned with the Buddhist nationalists in criticizing the Government for its suppressive measures to put down the riots, and arresting the Sinhala leaders. He tried to put the blame on the Coast Moors for the riots.

Ramanathan was in India when the riots erupted in Kandy and other places. He immediately returned to the country to defend the nationalists' interests. He made lengthy speeches at the Legislative Council criticizing the Government actions against the rioters. He demanded with other Sinhala nationalist leaders 'a Royal Commission' to inquire into the riots. Ramanathan also joined the other Sinhala leaders in London to persuade the British Government to release the Sinhala leaders who were imprisoned, and he succeeded in his mission. In turn, the members of the Sinhalese elite celebrated the event treating Ramanathan as their hero, and drew the cart on which Ramanathan was seated, through the streets of Colombo.[146] Ramanathan also wrote a book on "Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon 1915" which was published in London in 1916.

Ramanathan in his book on the riots severely criticizes the government for victimizing the Sinhalese and gives less importance to the losses suffered by the Muslims. In the very first sentence of

the book he tries to put the blame on the Muslims. According to Ramanathan "The intolerance and aggressiveness of a small section of the Mohammedans known to the Sinhalese as "Hambayas" (boatmen), and their insistence of the Sinhalese Buddhists passing in silence before their mosques in Gampola and Kandy, were the earliest of the causes of the recent riots."[147] Understandably, these events made the Muslim elite feel helpless and alienated from the two major competing communities and so they began to rely on themselves for their political future. Thus, the anti-Muslim sentiment of the Sinhalese elite, the 1915 riots, and the behaviour of the Tamil leadership had a lasting impact in consolidating the Muslim identity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Institutionalizing Muslim Identity

As we have seen so far, a strong foundation was laid for a separate Muslim identity during the pre-independence period in Sri Lanka. The under- developed colonial economy, the emergence of new social classes, and the introduction of communal representation in political organizations were the major factors contributing to this development

The post-independence period can be considered the second phase of the development of Muslim identity in this country. The Muslim identity consciousness was deepened and institutionalized throughout this period. Parliamentary electoral politics under the Donoughmore and Soulbury constitutions made tremendous impact on the consolidation of Muslim identity in Sri Lanka.[148] Two eminent political leaders, Sir Razik Fareed in the 1940s and 1950s and Baddudin Mahmood in the 1960s and 70s made significant contribution to institutionalize the Muslim identity in Sri Lanka.

By institutionalization I mean organizing separate social institutions in the public sector exclusively for Muslims, and legitimizing some of the Muslim interests. The first such institutions were set up in the field of education. As we have noted earlier, During the late 19th and early 20th centuries following the Christian

missionaries, the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim revivalists established separate schools for the benefit of their community. Those were private organizations but now in Sri Lanka we have three categories of government schools namely Sinhalese schools, Tamil schools and Muslim schools. The first two categories are in principle medium wise categories, but in practice they are also ethnic categories. The Muslim schools are exclusively an ethnic category although the medium of instruction is Tamil in these schools and some of these schools have Sinhala and English media too. There is no legal provision for this categorization. But I am told that there is a circular issued by the ministry of education for this purpose. According to this circular, if a particular school consists of more than 50% of the students belonging to a particular ethnic group, that school comes under the category of that group. The principal and the majority of the teachers should be from that group. This provision was especially made for establishing Muslim schools under the pressure of the Muslim elite especially by Razik Fareed in the 1940s and 50s, mainly to promote Muslim education and to accommodate the increasing number of Muslim teachers. Razik Fareed moved a motion at the Senate on 27.07.1948 "asking the government to appoint Muslim teachers to the schools which had a majority of Muslim pupils on its roll.[149] In the late 1950s W. Dahanayake, the then Minister of Education, did much for Muslims in this respect in order to satisfy the Muslim political leaders.

Earlier, mostly Tamil teachers were teaching in the Muslim dominated areas too. Most of the older generation of Muslims was taught by them. Gradually the Tamil teachers were replaced by Muslim teachers in the Muslim schools. All the Government schools follow a common curriculum except for a few subjects like language and religion. However Muslim schools follow a separate calendar to accommodate a special Ramzan vacation.

Two Muslim Teachers Training colleges were also established; one at Addalaichchenai another at Aluthgama (for females) in the 1940s. At the beginning, the Addalaichchenai Training College was

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meant for both Tamils and Muslims but after a few years, a separate training college was established for Tamils in Batticaloa, one of the reasons was, I was told that, there was a controversy over providing meat for lunch on Fridays. The Hindu Tamils do not eat meat on Fridays but Muslims prefer meat especially on Fridays. It is an evidence of cultural intolerance between these groups.

Another kind of educational institution which was set up on ethnic lines is the National College of Education. When Tamil medium Colleges of Education were proposed to be established in the 1990s, automatically two were allocated exclusively for Muslims one at Addalaichchenai and another at Aluthgama, on principle there is no ethnic university in Sri Lanka. All the universities are supposed to be national universities. However, in practice due to the ethnic conflict the University of Jaffna and the Eastern University have been exclusively for Tamils and the South Eastern University for Muslims. The other universities except Peradeniya are mainly for Sinhalese. Peradeniya still maintains at least in composition the multi-ethnic character of the country.[150] Thus, institutionalization of ethnicity is prominently visible in the field of education.

Another area of institutionalization of Muslim identity is personal law. "The Mohammaden Code of 1806 marks the beginning of a complementary and integral system of legislation that has had significant implication for Sri Lankan Muslims."[151] Originally this code applied to the Muslims in Colombo only, but was later extended to cover the whole Island (by the Section of Ordinance No 5 of 1852). From the 1920s Muslim elite expressed their dissatisfaction with the code of 1806 as a repository of their laws. M.T. Akbar (later Justice Akbar) was one of the foremost critics of the code.[152] Up to the 1920s the Mohammedan code of 1806 was administered in the ordinary civil courts. In 1925 the leaders of the Muslim community agitated against a divorce case and the Mohammedan Code of 1806 was replaced by a new Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Ordinance in 1929. Under this ordinance separate Quazi Courts were set up exclusively to deal with matrimonial disputes in the Muslim Community. The 1929 ordinance was

repealed by the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951. "Quazi courts were now given exclusive jurisdiction to handle all matters pertaining to marriage and divorce. Section 98 specifically mentions that "The status and the mutual rights and obligations of the parties shall be determined according to Muslim law governing the sect to which the parties belong". The jurisdiction of the district courts was thus removed totally and transferred to the Quazi courts.[153] According to Savitri Goonesekere "the introduction of special Quazi Courts was a unique development in the Sri Lankan legal system, since all other indigenous or customary laws were applied in the ordinary civil courts."[154]

The Muslim elite also succeeded in setting up government institutions to look after the maintenance of mosques and charitable trusts from the 1930s. *Muslim Intestate Succession and Wakfs Ordinance of 1931* was in operation till the mid 1950s. It was replaced by the *Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trusts or Wakfs Act of 1956*. Under this Act a separate government department with an executive Wakfs Board was established.[155]

Muslim identity was institutionally recognized also in government owned electronic media. A Muslim unit was set up in the SLBC nearly 40 years ago. They broadcast a separate Muslim Service exclusively for Muslim affairs. There is also a small Muslim Unit at the SLRC, which telecasts weekly Muslim programs. These electronic media promote ethnic and religions awareness among Sri Lankan Muslims. Although, there is no strong print media owned by Sri Lankan Muslims as in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a few tabloids and little magazines are published with a limited circulation and they are ethnically and religiously very sensitive.

Apart from these institutions, numerous social and cultural organizations and NGOs have been moulding and activating Muslim identity in Sri Lanka for the last several decades.

Tamil Nationalism and the Muslim Identity in the North and East

The 1980s marked the third phase of the development of Muslim Identity in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Muslim political leadership had its base mainly in the Western province for a long time because the Muslim mercantile class and the educated elites were centered around that province. Although nearly 25% of the total Muslim population of this country is concentrated in the East, and they are an economically strong majority in the Ampara district, they did not seek a strong ethnic identity and separate political leadership till the 1930s because their socio- political situation did not demand such a development. They were mostly engaged in agriculture, fishing and petty trade. They did not enter the modern education system to produce en educated middle class elite. They had a cordial relationship with the Tamils, the other major ethnic community of that area and did not face any severe competition in economy and politics from them.

However, with the introduction of the universal franchise in 1931 under the Donoughmore Constitution, the situation began to change gradually. The Eastern Muslims too were becoming more and more ethnically conscious, and gradually entered the modern education system and politics. The formation of Kalmunai District Muslim Association in 1936 was an outcome of this consciousness. It was formed to consolidate the Muslim awareness and to protect their interests in public life. P.M. Macbool Alim, the president of this association published its manifesto in 1937 entitled *Muslimkalukkoor Vignaapanam* (An Appeal to Muslims).[156] The following four objectives of this Association show their collective identity consciousness[157]

- The unity of the Muslims of the region for their political success.
- Their economic advancement.
- Modern education for Muslim men and women.

Employment opportunity for the Muslims in the government sector.

During the post-independence period the Eastern Muslims seriously engaged in political battles for seats in parliament. Political opportunism, scarcity of land, and economic competition created a mood of suspicion and hostility between Muslims and Tamil in the region and led even to some violent clashes locally in the 1950s and 60s. Later developments resulted in significant ethnic segregation of the ethnic communities.

With the introduction of standardization for university entrance in 1970-71 and a special quota for backward districts in 1974, Eastern Province youths both Tamil and Muslim were greatly benefited while the Jaffna Tamil youth were badly affected. The introduction of this system paved the way for better opportunities in higher education for Muslims and created a new professional class and an educated elite among them. They are the more ethnically sensitive and opinion making social groups. These groups were the base for the new Muslim political leadership in the East and they formed a Muslim political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) in 1980.

The need for a separate political party was felt even two decades before in the East, especially in the Ampara District. The All Ceylon Islamic United Front was formed in 1960 by Mr. M. S. Kariyappar, a popular Muslim politician of that time, for his immediate political benefit, but the party did not succeed because there was no strong social base as such at that time. But in 1980s the situation was entirely different.

Till the mid 1980s the Tamil-Muslim relationship in the East was not so badly damaged as it is at present, although some isolated communal violence occurred very seldom here and there and there were some unresolved disputes and grievances between Tamils and Muslims. There were some mutually convenient cooperation too. The Federal Party had formulated the concept of 'Tamil Speaking People' as early as in 1948 to include the Muslims for electoral

convenience. The primary motivation behind this concept was to get more seats in the parliament using Muslims' votes. The Muslim politicians also cleverly used this concept for their benefit and contested the election on the Federal Party tickets and got elected to the parliament, although they changed their party loyalty soon after their victory. Even in the 1977 general election a Muslim candidate contested in the Kalmunai electorate on the TULF ticket, and the emerging young Muslim politician Mr. M.H.M. Ashraf campaigned in Muslim areas for the victory of TULF, a party committed to separate state of Tamil Elam.

When Tamil militant groups emerged in the early 1980s, especially after the 1983 violence against Tamils, The Muslims from the North and East developed a sympathetic approach towards them. Several Muslim youths from the North and East joined the militant movements. A Muslim youth from Akkaraipattu was the area leader of EPRLF in the Kalmunai region and the Tamil militants sometimes took shelter in Muslim villages.

Like the Tamils, the Muslims too had grievances against Sinhala domination in the East, especially in the Ampara District. The Eastern Muslim also agitated against the government for inviting Israelis to the country. A Muslim youth was severely wounded when the police opened fire at a protest rally in Kalmunai against Israelis presence in the mid 1980s. Obviously the state machinery was not satisfied with the development in the East and waited for a opportunity to disturb the Tamil-Muslim relations in the East and to alienate them from each other.

The opportunity was soon provided by the militant groups, because of their politically unwise mishandling of Muslim community. They used the same tactics and methods of fund raising in the Muslim areas that they used predominantly in the mono-ethnic North.[158] They demanded money from the Muslim land owners and businessmen, confiscated their vehicles and abducted for ransom those who resisted. In 1984, within a few months three million rupees were extracted from the Muslims in Akkaraippattu

alone. This was the case in the other Muslim villages too. While the Tamils could not resist openly, the Muslims started to resist and agitate against these extractions and abductions. A three days *hartal* was organized by Muslims in Akkaraippattu in early April 1985 and it spread to other Muslim villages.[159] The Muslim discontent was cleverly utilized by the state machinery: leaflets were distributed to mobilize the Muslims against Tamils. Suddenly a communal violence broke out in Karaithivu and Akkaraippattu in the Ampara District in mid-April 1985. According to an investigation report eleven died and over forty were hospitalized and 12,000 were displaced.[160] The involvement of the security forces in the violence against Tamils was widely reported,[161] but the government denied it.

The repercussion was heavier in the Batticaloa District. The vulnerable Muslims in the interior villages were severely affected by the counter offensive of the Tamil militant groups. Although there is no authentic report on the losses, according to the newspapers reports nearly seventy Muslims were killed in the Batticaloa in April 1985, many wounded, 200 houses and several mosques were burned down, hundreds were permanently displaced from the interior villages and they lost thousands of acres of paddy land and herds of cattle.[162]

This communal violence between Tamils and Muslims caused by militant activities had a far-reaching impact on the Tamil-Muslim relations in the East. The Muslim were pushed towards the government and security forces for their safety and security, as the Tamils were pushed towards the militants in response to the atrocities of the security forces in the Tamil region especially in the North in the 1980s and after. The Muslims also joined the Home Guards, an ad hoc security system the government set up to satisfy the peoples' sentiment. However, the Home Guards did not have proper training and provided only with shotguns that were requested to be handed over at the police stations each morning, and they were too ill equipped to combat or to resist the militants. However, the Tamil media and the militant groups blamed the Muslim Home Guards

for atrocities against Tamils in the 1980s as a justification for the atrocities against Muslims.

The development of Tamil militancy in the North and East and their hostile attitude towards Muslims since 1985 created a strong feeling of insecurity among Muslims, and intensified their ethnic sentiment. The S.L.M.C under the leadership of the late M.H.M Ashraf sparked off this sentiment by its verbal militancy with religious overtones and became a major political force in the East, especially in the Ampara District. The SLMC almost monopolized Muslim politics in the East after the first Provincial Council elections of 1987. This had a severe repercussive effect on the Muslims. The LTTE started its ethnic cleansing campaign in 1990. From January to December 1990 more than 1000 Muslims were killed in the Eastern Province which includes the Kathankudy and Eravur massacre in August 1990. The entire Muslims population around seventy thousand were forcibly evacuated from the North. After a short lull, ethnic tension has been reactivated in the East after the MOU was signed in 2002 between the Government and the LTTE. Immediately after the MOU the LTTE monopolized Tamil politics in the North and East and claimed to be the sole representative of the Tamils. The only resistance they faced was from the Eastern Muslims and the LTTE does not seem to be ready to share political power with anyone in the North and East. Now the Eastern Muslims are more vulnerable to be subjected to further violence and displacement in the future, if there is no amicable settlement to the ethnic problem. This was evident in the post MOU violence (August 2002) against Muslims in Mutur and Valaichchenai. The entire Muslim population of Mutur was forced to leave the village in 2006.

The Muslim community, had to face challenges for survival also in the Sinhala dominated South during the last two decades. There were acts of violence against Muslims in many places in the South. Twenty such incidents were recorded during the last thirty years from 1976. Mawanella was very severe. The main reason I think is business competition. Still in several Sinhala urban areas,

Muslims are the main competitors to the Sinhala traders ranging from small boutique keepers to large shop owners.

There was also a SLMC factor in recent times. The SLMC had become an important political force even in the South due to the numerical weakness of the major political parties in the parliament. The SLMC too tried to capitalize on this political opportunity. Consequently it had a repercussive effect on the Muslims, although they mainly support the major national political parties in the South.

Since Muslims are in a more vulnerable position between the two opposing strong ethnic majorities in this country, they have also become more and more assertive of their separate identity based on religion and culture.

End Notes and References

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153. MWRAF, (1999), pp.23-26.

154. Goonesekere, (2000), p.9.

155. Ameen, A.H.G., (2003), pp.38-44.

156. This manifesto was published by the Association in order to get the support of the public for the political and social activities of Mudaliyar M.S. Kariyappar, the emerging political leader of the area.

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Chapter 5

Religious Awareness and the Process of Islamization

What is Islamization?

Islamization, a popular concept in the current Islamic discourse, means eliminating the deviant and un-Islamic socio-cultural practices among the Muslims and returning to true Islam. However, what is true Islam and what is acceptable and not acceptable in Islam have been matters of conflict and confrontation between different religious groups and schools of thoughts throughout the history of Islam and it has become a more acute problem in the cotemporary Islamic world.

The term Islamization or Islamism and fundamentalism are used synonymously by several authors.[1] However, the term fundamentalism has acquired a derogatory and offensive meaning in the current western political discourse, mainly because of the violent political resistance against Western domination in the Middle East and some of the Muslim scholars reject the indiscriminate use of the term fundamentalism.[2] Most of the modern Islamic writers prefer the term Islamism than fundamentalism and for them the former is more neutral and desirable than the latter.

Islamization is an ideological and political reaction to the processes of modernization or Westernization in the Muslim world. In other words it is a form of cultural and political resistance to western imperialism. However, no Islamist group rejects the material benefits of modern science and technology which comes from the West. They do not hesitate to use modern transport and

communication, industrial products, medical technology and arms and ammunition, etc., which are totally new to the Islamic world and products of the West. Even the very conservative Taliban and Al-Qaeda use the ultra modern weapons of the West to fight against the West.

Islamization in this sense is not against the benefits of industrialization which drastically transformed the world from the traditional feudal to capitalist modern. No society can attempt to go back to the pre-modern age rejecting modern scientific and technological advances. But, the Islamists are seriously concerned about the changes in the socio-cultural and political institutions which are the logical consequences of industrialization and they want to preserve the Islamic values, cultural norms and political systems which are governed by *sharia*. On the one hand enjoying the material benefits of the industrialization of the West and on the other hand rejecting its consequences of the socio-cultural and political changes has created a paradoxical situation in the Muslim world. This contradiction continues to prevail in the Muslim societies from the beginning of the modern era.

There are three opposing trends to solve this contradiction in the Islamic societies.

The first one is complete modernization or westernization. Mustafa Kamal Ataturk of Turkey was an extreme example of this trend. He abolished the Caliphate in 1924 and the Turkish state was declared officially secular. Sharia law was replaced by the modern legal system. Polygamy was prohibited and women were given equal rights with men to hold office. The Turkish fez was replaced by European hats and caps. Arabic script was replaced by the Roman script. The Christian calendar was adopted replacing the Islamic calendar and Sunday was made the official weekly holiday instead of Friday. Religious orders and societies were banned and a special uniform was prescribed for the *ulama*. Thus, Ataturk tried to completely secularize the Turkish state and polity on the European way.[3]

There are numerous individuals and political leaders who represent this trend in varying degrees in the modern Islamic world. Kamal Abdul Nassar of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Zulfikar Ali Bhuto of Pakistan were a few examples for such political leaders.

The second one is a total rejection of any change in the socio-cultural and political institutions and complete Islamization; that is returning to the past. The Taliban of Afghanistan is an extreme example of this trend. When they came to power in Afghanistan in the 1990s they implemented their version of Sharia strictly. They prohibited education and employments for women and strictly confined them to their houses. They also banned television and films. They destroyed the ancient Buddha statues in the Bamyan valley in 2001 ignoring the concerns of the outside world. Akbar S. Ahmed tries to maintain in the anthropological sense that the Taliban's ideology is basically tribalism (Pukhtunwali – the code of the Pukhtuns) and "much of it was far from the spirit and learning of Islam."[4] But the Taliban sincerely believe that their ideology is the true Islam and a significantly large number of the Muslims outside Afghanistan also believe that the Taliban are the true Muslims. Various Islamic movements like Tabligh Jamaat also represent this trend.

The third one is a mixture of Islamization and modernization of various kinds and degrees. It may be termed as Islamic modernization. Jamaluddin al Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Seyed Ahamed Khan, Mohamed Iqbal and Maulana Abulkalam Azad can be considered few representatives of various kinds of Islamic modernization.

The second and third trends of Islamization processes are observable among Sri Lankan Muslims from the late 19th century.

Revivalism as a Process of Islamic Modernization

Ethnicity and religion are inseparable as far as Sri Lankan Muslims are concerned and they also had a reciprocal impact on the

development of each other since Islam is the primary marker of the ethnic identity of Sri Lankan Muslims.

The educated Muslim elite who were in the forefront of the revivalist movement in the late 19th century strongly felt that promoting religious awareness was essential for the social mobility and ethnic consolidation of the Muslims. It was with this motivation the Jamiyatul Islamiya, the first Islamic organization in Sri Lanka was formed by Siddi Lebbe and his companions in 1886, with I.L.M. Abdul Azeez as secretary. The objective of this organization was to promote Islamic awareness among the Muslims in order to consolidate the Muslim identity and to work towards the social and political progress of the Muslims.[5] Islamisation of the Muslim community was the underlying ideology of the formation of Jamiyatul Islamiya.

Islamization in the late 19th century was an effort to unite the Muslims spiritually and culturally, based on Islamic principles which were interpreted by the modern educated elite and the traditional ulama, which some time lead to controversy and conflicts between them because of their different interpretations of Islam.

Jamiyatul Islamiya wanted to eliminate the socio-cultural and religious practices which were considered un-Islamic and superstitious by the revivalists. For example, shrine worship, belief in devils and spirits and related folk customs and rituals of healing were their targets. Siddi Lebbe wrote against such practices extensively in his Muslim Nesan.[6] For him these practices and beliefs were irrational and waste of money. More importantly they damage one's *iimaan*, the faith in Allah. Siddi Lebbe also wrote against the ulamas who promoted such folk practices and he described them as auctioneers who sell their religion for money and he used a metaphor for them as parasite of the religion.[7] Jamiyatul Islamiya also organized weekly religious talks to promote religious knowledge among the Muslims and motivated the ulamas to improve their oratory skills. Siddi Lebbe was also against the dowry system prevalent among the Muslims. For him getting dowry from one's father in law was a shameful act.[8]

Siddi Lebbe like Seyed Ahamed Khan propagated a 'modern rationalist version of Islam' which he thought was true Islam that could lead Muslims into the modern world. He, as most of the Muslim revivalist leaders of the Islamic world of his time, was on a double track of modernization and Islamization. He thought that Islam should be the foundation for any modernization process. He had to fight with the traditionalist ulamas who were against modern education and social reform. He wrote several articles and books on Islam and Islamic spiritualism that show his deep knowledge in the subjects. His book *Asrarul Alam* (Mysteries of the Universe) deals entirely with Islamic theology and spiritualism. His *Surutus Salat* deals with the daily prayer, one of the five foundation pillars of Islam. He sought to enhance this practice from meaningless ritual to a meaningful spiritualistic activity which could transform a person into a true ideal Muslim. He also edited a Tamil journal *Gnanateepam* (The Light of Wisdom) in 1892 entirely dedicated to religious affairs. While his Muslim Nesan tried to politically mobilize the Muslim community, *Gnanateepam* and his religious writings tried to give it a spiritual direction.

Siddi Lebbe interestingly tries to present his ideas on Islamic modernization in his novel *Asanbey Saritiram* (The Story of Asanbey), the first Sri Lankan Tamil novel published in 1885. The hero of the novel Asan, Tamilized form of Hasan, falls in love with Pauline, a beautiful British upper class modern Christian girl, and marries her after she is converted to Islam overcoming a chain of difficulties. The story has its setting in Egypt, India and Beirut but not in Sri Lanka.

Siddi Lebbe's novel is obviously moralistic and tendentious. The author wanted to show the merit of the Islamic way of life. He has created his main character Asan as a model of modern Muslim youth who are deeply rooted in Islamic faith.

Asan, son of Yusuf Pasha an influential minister of Egypt, was kidnapped by his stepmother when he was an infant, brought to India and handed over to Jaufer, an Arab Muslim. Jaufer and his

wife Aysha, who were longing for a child, happily adopt Asan as a gift from Allah without knowing the secret of the child. Asan grew in Surat in a good Islamic family environment and he was taught Arabic, Hindi, Persian and English. When he was a young boy of fourteen Aysha dies, Jaufer disappears, and he comes to know that they were not his real father and mother. He had to escape an attempted murder and comes to Calcutta, where he by chance helps the British Governor General and fortunately becomes his adopted son. The governor makes arrangements for his education in Calcutta and asks him to visit his palace frequently to develop a close relationship with his wife and children and also with the gentlemen who visit there in order to make him a civilized and cultured person in the European way.[9] Thus, Asan, a Muslim youth, gets an opportunity to experience the European culture.

Asan visits the Governor's palace weekly and becomes one among them. He goes hunting with the European boys, and to music and dancing halls with young girls. He also becomes an expert in western music and piano. "As he interact with Europeans frequently he becomes accustomed to their culture, hospitality and good behaviour"[10] Although, Asan had plenty of opportunity to mix with beautiful young girls and get spoiled, being an Islamic puritan, he never had sexual motivation and treated them as his own sisters, though, they loved him, longed for him and dreamed of him.[11] Asan, though he was in a position to fully enjoy the pleasure of youth, avoids the path of evil and sticks to good conduct, because he always had the fear of Allah's punishment. Every night when he goes to bed he prays to Allah to protect him from His test of putting him in a deceiving and alien religious environment and to strengthen his *iimaan* to protect himself from the evils.[12]

Although Asan falls in love with Pauline, the only daughter of Lord Delington, a wealthy British, he decides to leave her. He thinks that it is improper to develop a desire to marry her because of the religious difference and decides to leave the place. If he stayed there he would have to meet her and if he continued to meet her his mind would melt like wax in a flame and it may lead him to something wrong. So he leaves her and goes in search of his parents. Finally he finds his parents, marries Pauline and goes with her to London to settle there.

Thus, Siddi Lebbe creates an ideal Muslim youth, who is a cultural mixture of Islam and the West. His hero acquires modern knowledge and some aspects of Western culture without losing his faith in Islam, its ethical values and moral codes.

Siddi Lebbe's novel also tries to demonstrate the superiority of Islam over Christianity, although in his novel he refrained from comments positive or negative on Christianity or any other religion.

The three main Christian characters of this novel, the Governor General, who looked after Asan with parental care, Lord Delington, the father of the heroine and Pauline the heroine are created culturally and morally as very positive characters. The heroine embraces Islam not only because she falls in love with Asan but also on her own will. Asan never persuades her to convert but he wanted to leave her because of the religious and class differences between them. But she willingly embraces Islam as she wants to purify herself with the holy religion of Islam to keep Asan in her heart and she hopes that, if unfortunately they could not marry in this life, they could join in the 'next world' with Allah's help.[13] When her father comes to know at the end of the story, that she has been converted to Islam, she tells him that she believes in Allah and prays to Him since she is convinced that Islam is the true religion after reading many *kitabs* in Arabic and asks him not to be angry with her for this.

Lord Delington embraces Islam as he too becomes convinced and realizes that Allah is great and it was Allah, who protected his daughter from the bandits, who had abducted her for ransom. Since she was saved by Asan, he gives his daughter on marriage to him. Lord Delington formally converts to Islam in the presence of *ulamas* and gets an Islamic name Abdul Rahman. Pauline gets married to Asan and is renamed Amina. Thus, Siddi Lebbe establishes the superiority of Islam over Christianity.

The marriage between Asan and Pauline can be interpreted as the marriage between Islam and the West. Siddi Lebbe rejects both conservative or traditional Islam and total Westernization. He wanted modernization through Islamization. This could be seen a progressive ideology of his time.

Teaching Traditional Islam and Establishing Arabic Colleges

The traditional Islamic teaching in Sri Lanka as against modern education and modernization and to keep the Muslim community within the traditional Islamic frame started in the late 19th century. Till the middle of the 20th century the Sri Lankan Muslims mostly depended on South India for their traditional religious education and they had to go to Kiilakkarai or Kaayalpatinam to be trained in Islamic scholarship and to become *ulamas*. Some of them went to North India too. However, the Madrasatul Bari, the first Arabic college in Sri Lanka to train Sri Lankan Muslims in traditional Islamic scholarship, was established in 1884 at Weligama in the Southern Province by Seyed Mohamed Ibnu Ahamed Lebbe (1816 – 1898) popularly known as Mappillai Lebbe Alim an influential South Indian Islamic scholar who had a far reaching impact on the development of a kind of conservative traditional Islamic scholarship particularly a South Indian variety of it in Sri Lanka.

Mappillai Lebbe, a disciple and son in law of Thaika Shahib, one of the great Islamic scholars of the 19th century, established the famous Madrasatul Aruusiya in Kelakkarai in the mid 19th century. For the benefit of Tamil speaking Muslims he wrote several religious books on Sharia such as *Fathul Madeen, Fathus Salam, Fathud Dayyan* and *Maghani* based on Arabic works by Imam Shafi and Imam Ghazzali. His books are used by the *ulama* as well as the public as the main reference books on Sharia. His *Maghani* (the treasure) is the final and enlarged version of his earlier works. He wrote it in Arabic Tamil and it was transliterated into Tamil in 1994. Since there is an increasing popular demand, the 4th edition was published in 2001.

Mappillai Lebbe, a follower of Qadiriya Tariqa, frequently visited Sri Lanka and established several *takkiyas* – small mosques and Sufi meditation centres- in Colombo, Weligama, Galle, Matara and Hambantota.[14] He was mainly responsible for the spread of Qadiriya Tariqa in Sri Lanka.[15]

Following the Madrasadul Bari, the oldest Arabic college in Sri Lanka, several Arabic colleges established in Galle (1892), Kinniya (1899), Maharagama (1931) and Matara (1915) and hundreds of ulamas were produced by these colleges. They were responsible for preaching Islam and to develop religious consciousness among the Muslims.

After independence, Arabic colleges mushroomed in Sri Lanka owing to the Islamic resurgence. From 1884 to 1950 only 15 Arabic colleges were established in Sri Lanka. However, from 1950 to 2000 a little more than 100 colleges were established. That shows the trend of traditional Islamic resurgence during the period. At present more than 150 Arabic colleges are functioning all over the country except in the Northern Province. In the year 2000 there were 101 Arabic colleges registered at the Department of Muslim Cultural Affairs. Others were not registered. Among the registered colleges 88 were for men and 13 for women. The following table shows the provincial and district level distribution of these Arabic Colleges.[16]

Understandably there are more Arabic colleges in the Eastern Province where the Muslim concentration is higher than the other provinces. Western and North Western Provinces come second. More than 50% of the Arabic colleges are located in the five districts, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Kurunagala, Ampara and Kandy. According to Barie around 1000 students pass out annually as *maulawis* from these Arabic colleges.[17] There is a recent trend of starting 'informal' Arabic colleges in the mosques by the Islamist groups and individuals in many parts of the country. However, there is no authentic information about these 'informal' colleges.

Province	Total	District	Total	Male	Female
Eastern	36	Trincomalee	13	11	02
		Batticaloa	12	10	02
		Ampara	11	08	03
Western	16	Colombo	05	05	—
		Gambaha	05	04	01
		Kalutura	06	06	—
North Western	16	Kurunagala	12	11	01
		Putalam	04	03	01
Central	12	Kandy	10	10	—
		Matala	02	02	—
Southern	11	Galle	07	06	01
		Matara	04	04	—
Sabragamuwa	06	Kegalle	04	03	01
		Ratnapura	02	02	—
North Central	03	Polannaruwa	02	01	01
		Anuradapura	01	01	—
Uva	01	Badulla	01	01	—
Total	101			101	88	13

Most of these madrasas are supported by the public, *tariqas* and *tariqa* related wealthy Muslims. After 1970 some of the Islamic *da'wah* movements like Tabligh Jamaat, Jamaat e Islami established their own madrasas. Some of these madrasas are funded by some Arab countries.

Most of the students of these madrasas come from lower income families and orphans are also enrolled. There are a few colleges established specially for orphans. Some of the parents send their delinquent children to these colleges to bring them up as good and respectable persons. Some of the dedicated members of the Islamic *da'wah* movements also send at least one of their children to these colleges to dedicate them to the service of Allah. The middle and upper class parents rarely send their children to these madrasas.

Most of these madrasas still teach the subjects based on the Darse Nilami curriculum designed by Maulana Mulla Nilamuddeen (?-1775) of India in the middle of the 18th century. This curriculum includes the subjects, Arabic language and grammar, logic, philosophy, *tafzir*, and Islamic Sharia.[18] Modern developments of thought in the Islamic world are not incorporated into their curriculum and they strictly adhere to the traditional interpretation of Islam of a particular school of their choice. A vast majority of these madrasas follow the Shafi school of thought. They exclude the secular subjects introduced by the modern educational system.

However, there have been some positive changes in the curriculum at least in some of the Arabic colleges from 1970s. They incorporated the school curriculum as part of their teaching programme. They also prepare their students for the public examinations of G.C.E. (O/L) and (A/L) conducted by the Department of Examinations. This trend was the impact of a public examination called the Al Alim Part 1 and Part 2 introduced by the Department of Examinations in 1966. The Al Alim certificate was an alternative to the Maulavi certificate awarded by the Arabic colleges and was given priority by the Government for the appointment of Arabic teachers in Government schools. Al Alim examinations included religious as well as nonreligious subjects. Most of the madrasa students also wanted to sit this examination in order to secure Government jobs and the madrasa administrations had to arrange special classes or allow their students to study themselves to sit this examination.

Jamiya Naleemiya, a different kind of madrasa, initiated some changes in madarasa education in the country. It was established in 1973. It is the only Arabic college in Sri Lanka that combined the traditional Islamic teaching with nonreligious education up to the

highest level. It is a combination of tradition and modernity with an objective to create *ulamas* who have broader knowledge and who can provide religious solutions to the problems of the continuously changing contemporary world. It was founded by M.I.M. Naleem a well known gem merchant and a philanthropist from Beruwela and conceptually guided by A.M.A. Azeez, the prominent Muslim scholar and educationalist. It is the only Arabic college in Sri Lanka to be affiliated to the International Islamic University of Islamabad in 1996 and its certificate is recognized by the University as a qualification to follow their Degree programme.

Naleemiya enrolls only boys who have passed the G.C.E. (O/ L) examination and provides seven years of religious education. The students are also taught to sit the G.C.E. (A/L) examination and B.A. external examination of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. They choose Arabic, Islamic Civilization and one other Arts subject for their degree. Although the students of Jamiya Naleemiya are basically trained in traditional Islamic scholarship, they get their Maulavi (As Sheik) certificate as well as the University degree certificate and are able to find employment in the government sector, and some of them proceed to follow higher education in the Arab countries as well as in the local universities.

In all these Arabic colleges, the main component of teaching - the Arabic and Islamic component - is mostly on the conservative traditional line. They give more importance to *sharia* as a sacred and static doctrine of Islamic law without a proper understanding of the evolutionary nature of *sharia*. They do not take account of the ever changing nature of society and they are unable to interpret Islam as a religion suitable to the contemporary modern world.[19]

Most of the *ulamas* who pass out from these Arabic colleges have developed an antipathy towards the new cultural changes. I personally witnessed the worst kind of such antipathy a few years ago. A young *maulavi* seriously criticized in his Friday sermon in a Kandian village mosque the use of toothpaste and brush for cleaning the mouth instead of using *meswak* which was used by the Prophet

and his companions. Ironically, a tiny FM microphone attached to his outer garment took his voice to the amplifier and the electric fans were working inside the mosque, which were unimaginable during the Prophet's time. This is indicative of the type of training they receive from these madrasas.

No Arabic college has included the study of other religions or comparative religion in their syllabi.[20] Siddi Lebbe wanted the *ulama* to have knowledge of various other religions. He says that, "Acquaintance with Vedanta of the Hindus, the philosophy of the Buddhists and the Theosophy of the Europeans will facilitate success in any controversies with people of other faiths and in the spread of Islam among them by means of preaching."[21] Although Siddi Lebbe's motive was to establish the supremacy of Islam over the other religions and to vanquish them, which was the common conviction of religious missionaries as a rule, his idea of knowing other's religion is very important.

Siddi Lebbe in the late 19th century seriously criticized the content and the methods of teaching in the Arabic colleges in his time.[22] However, there is no drastic change in the curriculum and the method of teaching in most of the Arabic colleges even in the 21st century. Arabic competence is also very poor among the students. They are taught mostly in the Tamil medium. According to Barie, a senior lecturer in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Peradeniya, only 5% of the students of these colleges have good competence in Arabic, because the teaching methods are more traditional and not innovative. A principal of a leading Arabic college in the Ampara District told me that they could not employ even their students to their teaching staff because of their competence in Arabic was not up to the expected standard. It is regrettable that after seven to eight years of teaching Arabic, the Arabic colleges could not produce *maulavis* who are competent in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an.

It is appropriate to conclude this section with the following quotation from Siddi Lebbe:

"Language is a key with which the door of the repository of knowledge should be opened and the riches taken out. Most of the theologians and sheikhs in this country are in the situation of those who, holding a key that cannot open the door of the repository, thinking that they have made all the riches in their own. People maintaining religious schools should heed what I have said above and affect changes"[23]

Emergence of Islamic Da'wah Movements

The beginning of the post-independence period can be considered the second phase of the development of Islamic awareness among Sri Lankan Muslims. The establishment of a vast number of Arabic colleges during this period was noted in the last section. Several Islamic *da'wah* movements also emerged in Sri Lanka in the 1950s. Jamaat e Islami, Tabligh Jamaat and Tawhid Jamaat are most influential movements among them. A brief introductory remarks about each of the movements are given below.

Jamaat e Islami, an Islamist organization, was founded in India in 1941 by Maulana Abulala Maududi (1903-1979), one of the most influential conservative Islamic thinkers of the 20th century. He was the philosopher, spiritual leader and mentor of the movement. His theory of Islamic way of life can be considered as a unified theory of Islam. According to this theory, the life of a Muslim is totally governed by the Islamic sharia. According to Maududi, Islam admits only the way of life found in the Qur'an and sharia formulated by the imams based on the tradition of the Prophet, and sharia is the divine law that is not immutable. "Islam should become an integral part of a Muslim's life. It should be his entire life, its spirit and its moving force. One's understanding, consciousness, thinking and views cannot be other than what Islamic teaching are. Religion should guide a person from the beginning of his life and through its journey to the other world (akhirat) and should enable him to pass through all the phases successfully"[24]

Maududi's ultimate aim was to establish the Islamic state in the world. His theory of Islamic State is unique and idealistic. According to his theory Allah is the ruler of mankind and He has the exclusive right to make laws. The caliph is only His vicegerent whose duty is to implement the laws of Allah. Maududi was vehemently opposed to the idea of a secular state. For him Islam and the state are inseparable and he opposed Jinnah for his idea of Western secular state. For Maududi "any government and its laws based on any source other than that of God and His Messenger is illegitimate"[25]

As Asghar Ali Engineer points out "Maududi maintains that cordial relations with non-Muslims is not a real aim of an Islamic society; on the contrary, its real aim is to impose God's rule over the society even if its means confrontation with non- Muslims. In other words religious conflict is to Maududi what class conflict is to communists. Real peace, according to Maududi, can be established only if all submit to the law of God, only when, the non-Muslims reconcile themselves to the establishment of the Islamic rule."[26]

After the partition of India, Maududi told the Muslims remaining in India that "so far as the Muslims are concerned, I want to tell them that present irreligiousness (secularism) and the concept of national democracy are out and out opposed to your religion. If you bow your head before them, you will be going against the teaching of the Qur'an. If you participate in its establishment and sustenance, then you will be raising the banner of revolt against God."[27] These words of Maududi are amount to be a fatwa that prevent the Muslims in participating in the political and administrative establishment of non-Islamic states, which is a suicidal advice to the Muslims in the non-Muslim countries.

It is obvious that Maududi's Islamic Ideology is chauvinistic and confrontational in nature. It is more problematic to the multi-religious and multi-cultural countries of the modern world. Most of the modern thinkers of the Islamic world would not agree with Maududi's version of totalitarian Islam. However, Maududi's concept of all inclusive Islam has a great influence among the middle class

Muslim intelligentsia in South Asian countries. Jamaat e Islami has become a strong religious and political movement in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India during the last few decades.

Jamaat e Islami was officially established in Sri Lanka in 1954 with the objective of Islamizing the Muslim community in all its socio-cultural aspects, although, it had been functioning in this country from 1947. Jeylani Shahib from Kaayalpatinam, who had direct contact with Maulana Maududi, first introduced Jamaat e Islami in Sri Lanka. He published a journal *Arul Jothi* and conducted the Qur'an classes in the early 1950s and when the Jamaat e Islami was formally established in 1954 Jeylani was elected the first *ameer* (leader) of the movement. It has attracted a considerable portion of the educated middle class and youth in all parts of Sri Lanka. It has a few branches and numerous study circles islandwide with thousands of members and sympathizers.

Jamaat e Islami as a well organized movement has its own publication and propaganda machinery. They publish the monthly journal *Al Hasanath* in Tamil and *Prabodaya* in Sinhala to propagate their religious ideology basically based on Maududi's thought. Jamaat e Islami has translated and published many of the Maududi's writings in Tamil.

Unlike the Pakistani 'Headquarters,' the Jamaat e Islami in Sri Lanka has not participated directly in politics, may be because of the injunction issued by Maududi against participating in the political and administrative institutions of the non-Islamic state. However, the members and sympathizers of Jamaat e Islami are working in the administrative and educational institutions of the Sri Lankan state, which is against Maududi's doctrine.

Sri Lankan Jamaat e Islami is deeply involved in religious and other socio-cultural activities. More than ten of the Arabic colleges in the Island are under the influence of the ideology of the Jamaat e Islami and five of them are directly controlled by them. The main objective of these colleges is to produce preachers for the movement.[28] During the recent years Jamaat e Islami has become one of the biggest social service organizations of the country. After the tsunami disaster in 2004 it was deeply involved in relief and rehabilitation programmes in the affected areas and spent billions of rupees on several projects. However, the Jamaat e Islami does not attract different sections of the people as the Tabligh Jamaat does.

Tabligh Jamaat, comparatively a more conservative international Islamist movement, was founded by Maulana Ilyas in India. The movement was established in Sri Lanka in 1953 and has been fast developing in this country for the last three or four decades with a tremendous impact on the Muslim society. The Tabligh movement, unlike the Jamaat e Islami concentrates only on religious activities particularly to get people involved in religious rituals especially in regular daily prayer. Their conviction is that the involvement in regular prayer will transform the entire life of the people.

Tabligh Jamaat, in contrast to the Jamaat e Islami, consciously refrains from any involvement of what they call worldly affairs such as politics and social activities. It is not a political or social movement but only a religious movement that appeals to the individuals to return to the path of Allah that leads them to the permanent place in Heaven.

The Tablighis construction of Islam is very simple. For them the world is temporary and only the next world (akhirat) is permanent. One should invest in this world for his/her permanent stay in Heaven in the next world. The investment means practicing the commands of Allah in his/her daily life. Those who do not practice Allah's commands will end up in Hell. Nothing that they earn in the worldly affairs – their power, fame, wealth, position or education would help them, but only their investment on Allah's path will help them in the next world.

Maulana Ilyas metaphorically states this as follows:

"...life is a moving train. The hours and minutes are its bogies and our engagements (the way we spend our time) are the traveling passengers. What has happened is that our

worldly and materially based engagements have crowded the bogies of the train to such an extent that they do not allow the affable and other-worldly commitments to enter in. Our task is to lodge, with determination, the exalted schedule (which pleases Allah and ensures our security in akhirat) on the seats and make the degenerate passengers move out"[29]

To lodge the exalted schedule on the seats and to move out the degenerate passengers, the Tabligh Jamaat provides the following six fundamental principles to the followers: [30]

1. *Kalima*- professing the faith in monotheism (*tawhid*). Allah is the only God and Mohamed is His Prophet. Memorizing, remembering and reciting it with the understanding of its meaning is the first fundamental principle to be a Muslim.

2. Practicing the obligatory daily prayers. A Muslim who believes in Allah should pray five times a day. During the prayer the believer's whole body and mind are surrendered to the command of Allah. This practice makes the believer remember the superiority, greatness and the commands of Allah throughout the day.

3. Seeking knowledge of Allah's commands (*ilm*) and remembering Allah (*dikr*). *Ilm* in Arabic means knowledge in general. However, in the traditional Islamic scholarship it means only Islamic knowledge. Every member of the Tabligh Jamaat is expected to acquire the knowledge of Qur'an, Hadis and Sharia. *Ilm* is emphasized to make one's faith in Allah pure and strong. *Dikr* is remembering and expressing the believer's gratefulness to Allah in every moment of life. The continuous remembrance 'intensifies one's devotion' to Allah.

4. Respecting the Muslims (*Ikram*). A member of the Jamaat is expected to respect and treat equally the co-religionists and a fellow member irrespective of their authority, seniority, racial superiority, economic status and nationality.

5. Pure intention and sincerity (*ikhlaas*). It is expected that the intention of a tablighi should be devoid of worldly aspiration. His action and activities purely and sincerely should be intended to fulfill Allah's commands and not for worldly benefits or fame. "The prophet is believed to have said that another name of faith (*iimaan*) is sincerity (*ikhlaas*). Not to have *ikhlaas* is like submitting to several considerations of which Allah is just one."

6. To spare time for inviting others to the commands of Allah and the ways of the Prophet. This is the primary activity of Tabligh Jamaat and the word tabligh means propagation. Each member of the Jamaat is obliged to involve in a weekly round (*gasht*) in the locality around the mosque and has to spend three days once a month outside his locality. He must spend forty days (*chilla*) once a year in a distant place and he may also spend four months once in his life time in a given place.

Thus a tablighi has to leave his home, his family and his work place frequently for a specific period to go on Allah's path and they sincerely believe that Allah will reward them and look after their family obligations in their absence. They report many mysterious incidents to say how Allah safeguarded them and helped them when they were on the duty of Allah. Mohamed Talib cites a tablighi's claim that "a jamaat staying in a certain mosque in Bhopal found themselves untouched by the poisonous fumes of the gas leak from the Union Carbide Factory in December 1984"[31]

The first Tabligh convention (*ijtima*) was held at the Vekanda Jumma Mosque in Colombo in 1953. It was the beginning of the Tabligh Movement in Sri Lanka and now it is the largest Islamic movement in this country. Its simplistic construction of Islam has attracted people from all walks of life. It has a large membership varying from the big business community to the wage labour class

and from the highly educated intellectuals and professionals to uneducated peasants. They have a well organized network in this country. Their *da'wah* (preaching) activities are based in Mosques Island wide, with their headquarters is in Colombo. They have divided the country into 169 areas which are grouped into twelve clusters for their *da'wah* activities. More than fifty Arabic colleges support their religious activities and nearly twenty five Arabic colleges are under their direct control.[32]

Tabligh Jamaat is not seriously concerned about the socio-political problems of Sri Lankan Muslims. They have ready-made simplistic answers for such problems. When the entire Northern Muslims were forcibly evacuated by the LTTE in 1990, a senior member of the Jamaat told me that it was Allah's punishment to them. During the tsunami disaster in December 2004, unlike the Jamaat e Islami, the Tabligh Jamaat did not take much interest to mobilize their members to seriously involve in rehabilitation or reconstruction works although they involved in relief works such as cleaning the houses and clearing the debris and distributing food items immediately after the tsunami. They saw the tsunami as a proof of Allah's mighty power and they were engaged in *bayans* (preaching) to tell the people how Allah tests their *iimaan*.

Tabligh Jamaat as a rigid sectarian organization has created a specific religious identity for the Muslims. They have their own code of conduct and wear their own special attire. Fairly long beard, white lace cap or turban, a long loose white upper garment and the lower garment at least two inches above the ankles are the visible identity of a tablighi. Women have no significant role to play in the Tabligh Jamaat Movement. They are kept in total seclusion and are completely veiled when they are taken out.

Jamiyyathu Ansaris Sunnathul Muhammatiyya, popularly known as **Tawhid Jamaat**, which has its headquarters at Paragahadeniya in the Kurunegala district is another Islamist organization worth mentioning here. The Tawhid Jamaat was founded in 1947 by Abdul Hameed Al Bakry (1909-1976), popularly known as Dharvesh Hajiyar, a native of Paragahadeniya. Though Jamiyya is not an island wide organization it has strongholds in several places in this country, especially Kurunegala and Kalmunai.

Abdul Hameed gained his knowledge of Islamic theology at several Arabic colleges in Sri Lanka, South and North India and finally in Saudi Arabia. He spent more than a decade in Mecca learning Arabic, Islamic theology and Sharia. He returned to his native village in 1947 with the reformist spirit and a deep knowledge of orthodox Islam which was branded by hostile traditional native Islamic scholars as 'Wahabism', a Saudi Arabian version of fundamentalism.[33]

Abdul Hameed was very intolerant of what he regarded as un-Islamic practices of fellow Muslims in this country. He accepted only the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet for religious sanctions and rejected all the traditional folk religious practices from shrine worship to religious feasts as *shirk* and *fit'at*. He and his disciples went to the extent of destroying some shrines in his village and a case was filed against them in the District Court in 1948. He acquired many disciples but also made enemies during his religious campaign in the 1950s. Public religious debates were held in several places and one of the debates held in Kalmunai ended in violence in 1951.

Abdul Hameed founded an Arabic college at Paragahadeniya, which has become one of the largest Islamic Institutions in this country. He also started a propagandist journal Unmai Udayam (the Dawn of Truth) in 1955 and was its chief editor for a long period. He was allowed to settle in Mecca with his family by King Abdul Azeez bin Abdul Rahman in 1971 and passed away there in 1976.[34]

The followers of the Tawhid movement have become a distinct religious sect within the Sri Lankan Muslim community. They have their own mosques and religious institutions. They differ from the other members of the community basically in their ritualistic religious practices and beliefs like many other Islamist groups.

The impact of these organizations on the process of Islamization of Sri Lankan Muslim community, apart from the socio-political

developments that I discussed earlier is very great. They played a very significant role in the development of religious awareness and in deepening the ethnic consciousness and in almost creating a cultural homogeneity among Sri Lankan Muslims during the past two or three decades, although there are serious ideological differences between them.

The development of religious awareness among Sri Lankan Muslims is discernible in the extensively increased number of mosque goers during the past few decades and also in the increase of the number of mosques in rural as well as in the urban areas. It is also discernible in the renovation and expansion of mosques almost in all cities and in many villages in order to accommodate more people who come to pray, especially for Jumma prayers on Fridays.

Towards Cultural Purification

The development of religious and ethnic consciousnesses led the Muslims to seek a separate cultural identity based on the fundamentals of their religion, Islam, to establish themselves as a distinct ethnic community in order to differentiate themselves from the other Sri Lankans especially from Tamils with whom they share the same language, Tamil, and some cultural features.

Since, Islam has become the primary marker of their ethnic identity, Arabic, the language of Islam became one of the most important cultural symbols of the Muslims, although a vast majority of them do not speak or understand Arabic.

One important use of Arabic by Muslims is to name the members of their community and their social institutions. Sri Lankan Muslims exclusively use Arabic for their personal names. This was not so rigid half a century ago. Then there were three types of Muslim personal names. 1) Purely Tamil names, 2) Tamil + Arabic or Arabic + Tamil blend names and 3) Purely Arabic names.[35]

The first two types of personal names have gradually disappeared and the third type has now become exclusive, due to the ethnic and religious consciousness and the process of cultural purification.

In the earlier period Arabic personal names too were mostly nativised; that is the Arabic phonological patterns were assimilated according to the Tamil phonological patterns. For example, the following female personal names Katheesa Umma, Semilattumma, Seyinampu and Mukkulattu are the nativised forms of Katheeja, Jameela, Zainab and Um Kultum respectively. This type of nativisation gradually ceased and at present the Muslim personal names are pronounced and written as closely as to the Arabic originals.

The naming of social institutions in Arabic has also become an increasing cultural phenomenon among Sri Lankan Muslims. There is a tendency noticeable from 1960s to use Arabic to name their schools, homes, business institutions and journals. For example, in the Ampara District most of the Muslim schools have been renamed with an Arabic title from 1960s, as in Kalmunai *Zahira* College Maruthamunai *Al-Manar* Vidyalaya, and Ninthavur *Al-Ashrak* Vidyalaya. Before this tendency arose, Muslim schools were named as Government Muslim Boys/Girls/Mixed schools with their place names.

This renaming tendency is more noticeable in the urban areas than in the remote rural areas. For example, in the urban Kalmunai education district 15 out of 18 Muslim schools have been renamed, whereas in Potuvil area only one out of 8 schools has been renamed. This is an indication of the identity consciousness of the urban middle class elite and the trend of cultural purification or Islamization among them.

Most of the traditional and folk cultural practices have been gradually eliminated through this process of cultural purification form the early post-independence period. For example, folk theatre was a popular performing art among Muslims in the Eastern Province and also in the Mannar and Puttalam areas on the eve of the independence and also a little after that. This was an influence of the traditional folk theatre *(Naattukkuuttu)* of the Tamils. A number of

South Indian Islamic folk plays, *Ali Paatusha Naadakam, Appaasi Naadakam* and *Thaiyaaru Sulthaan Naadakam* for example were performed on the rural stage. Some of the artists, all males, who participated in these plays are still living in the Ampara district. However, these performances were considered un-Islamic by the newly emerging religiously conscious groups and have gradually ceased to be staged. Likewise, the observance of the folk religious practices and marriage customs have also disappeared or became less common or unpopular since they are considered to be un-Islamic.

The question whether a cultural or a religious practice is Islamic or un-Islamic became very important and was seriously discussed and sometimes provoked violence among various religious groups and even individuals throughout this period. Various sects and groups have developed their own interpretation of Islam and they sincerely believe and try to prove that only their interpretation is truly Islamic and try to impose it in practice. The recent religious violence at Kathankudi, the largest Muslim village in Sri Lanka, in the Batticaloa District (2006) is a case in point. The Muslim Identity at the macro level seems to be superficially unifying the Sri Lankan Muslim community. But at the same time, the religious and political groups seriously polarized the community at the micro level. This is the contradictory reality of the Sri Lankan Muslim community.

End Notes and References

1. See for example, Fred Halliday, 1994 and Mohamed Charfi, 2005
2. Ahmed, Akbar S. (2003:18-19)
3. See for more detailed study on modernization in Turkey, Saeed, Javaid, (1994:157 - 196)
4. Ahmed, Akbar S. (2003:142)
5. Ameen, (2000:133)
6. See for some details Ameen, (2000:134-139)
7. Ibid. p. 137
8. Ibid.p.138)
9. Siddi Lebbe (1990:42)
10. Ibid. p 92
11. Ibid. pp 92-93
12. Ibid. pp 43, 93
13. Ibid. pp104-106
14. See, Ameen, (2000:163) and Zukri, (1986:354)
15. *Tariqa* refers to Sufi orders in Islam. There are numerous Sufi orders in the Muslim world. Qadriya, Shaduliya, Naqshabandiya, Rifaiya and Chishtiya were spread in Sri Lanka during the 19th century through the South Indian Sufi scholars. Among these Qadriya and Shadduliya were more popular and strong in Sri Lanka especially in the Southern districts. There were reports of conflicts and confrontations between the followers of these *tariqas* in the late 19th century and even in the early 20th century. See for more details on tariqas in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka, Sahabdeen, (1995), Ameen, (2000:159-175), Zukri, (1986:351-354), and McGilvary, (1998:452).
16. That table is adopted from Barie (2004)
17. Ibid. p.17
18. See Barie, (2001:95-102) and (2004:18). See also, Javaid Saeed (1994), pp.103-107 for details on religious education in India and Pakistan based on Mulla Nilamuddeen syllabus. According to Javaid this syllabus "has been followed in all Muslim religious schools of Indo-Pakistan for the last two hundred years...the most surprising fact to be gleaned from the syllabus is that the study of the Qur'an is excluded from it." Two commentaries of the Qur'an written in 1316 and 1505 are studied in the last year of the study. "In the twenty one subjects covered by the syllabus, almost all the books studied belong to the medieval period." Ibid.
19. This is a common feature of the Muslim world especially in the South Asian region. In Pakistan alone estimated 50000 *madrasas* are functioning and according to Ahmed (2003:144) their syllabi are too narrow and encourage religious chauvinism. He further says that: "these madrasas laid the foundations for the populist and militant Islamic leadership that would emerge in the 1990s. Mostly from poor, rural backgrounds, speaking only the local language, dressed traditionally, and with beards that asserted their Islamic identity, these students would become the warriors who formed the Taliban and go to conquer Afghanistan." (Ahamed, 2003:144-45)
The Sri Lankan Situation is some what different from that of Pakistan. The ground reality is not favorable to the development of militant Islam in Sri Lanka as the Muslims are a scattered minority and comparatively they enjoy more freedom and democratic rights in Sri Lanka except in the North and East where the ethnic tension is intensive and the war is ongoing. However, the madrasas in Sri Lanka are ideologically Islamist and have sympathy in various degrees with growing global trends of Islamism.
20. The Principal, Al Hamiya Arabic College, Kalmunai, told me that they teach about the other religions briefly to the final year students.

21. Siddi Lebbe, 1983:150
22. Ibid.p183
23. Ibid. p.150
24. Engineer, Asghar Ali, 1980:124
25. Ibid. p.129
26. Ibid, p131
27. Ibid. p.133
28. Barei, 2001:103
29. Talib, Mohamed, 1998:315
30. For More details of these fundamental principles of Tabligh Jamaat see, Talib (1998:318-324)
31. Ibid. p.337
32. Barie, 2001:133-138
33. Wahhabism is a religious doctrine of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1791) of Saudi Arabia. He considered any deviation from Sharia as innovation and therefore un-Islamic. He believed that it was his mission to lead Muslims back to true Islam. "He believed that only the Arabs could bring Islam back to its original pristine purity, and he considered it his life's purpose to mobilize the Muslims for the achievement of this backward-looking utopia. He discounted all the civilizing elements in Islam in favour of norms and ways of life of the nomads. For him true Islam was that of the generation of the prophet, which meant that the Arabs alone were true bearers of the tradition of Islam, and in this way he could challenge the Ottomans' right to rule." Bassam Tibi (1971), pp.62-63.
34. See for more information about the religious activities of Abdul Hameed Al Bakri, Ibrahim, M.M.M. (1996).
35. For Arabic use among Muslims see, Nuhman, M.A.(1988).

Chapter 6

Ethnic Identity and Muslim Women
Gender Equality or Subordination?

Status of Women in Islam

It can be argued from a historical perspective that Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet, had given more rights and equality to the Muslim women than the women in other communities in that historical period. However, it is also true that Muslim women have been deprived of those rights and subordinated by men under the male dominated social system throughout the historical periods of Muslim Society, like women who live under patriarchy all over the world. Sri Lankan Muslim women are no exception to this universal phenomenon.

Most of the Islamic scholars try to make a distinction between the Qur'anic stand on women and the actual practices in the Muslim world in the name of Islam.

According to the Qur'an not only men and women but also all human beings are equal in creation. The following verse clearly states this:

> O, mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not you may despise each other.) Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah hath full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (49:13)

It is obvious from this verse that nation, race, tribes or gender does not matter to God, but only the righteousness. It is the only

criterion for Allah's reward. In this sense men and women are equals and there is no gender hierarchy between them.

The following the Qur'anic verse definitely equates the good deeds of men and women without any gender hierarchy. In this verse gender is specifically referred in equal term.

> For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women
> For devout men and women, for true men and women,
> For men and women who are patient and constant,
> For men and women who humble themselves,
> For men and women who in charity,
> For men and women who fast,
> For men and women who guard their chastity,
> And for men and women who engage much in Allah's remembrance,
> For them Allah has prepared forgiveness and great reward.
>
> (33:35)

This verse categorically states that men and women are equal in the sight of Allah, if they do what they are expected to do.

However, there are a few Qur'anic verses and Hadiths which admits superiority of men over women as the following one:

> Men are protectors and maintainers of women, because, Allah has made the one of them excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband's absence what Allah would have them guard (4:34).

Some of the modern Islamic scholars argue that this type of Qur'anic verses should not be read as normative, but should be seen as pragmatic in its socio-historical contexts. Asghar Ali Engineer argues that:

> "This verse seems to be harsh on women but it should be seen in its proper context. In those time women were confined to their houses and men alone were their providers. The Koran takes this reality into account and *on this ground* accords men's superiority over women. But it must be noted that the Koran does not glorify such a social structure nor declare it to be normative. A social structure should and does change and if in a social structure where women are maintainers or co-partners with men (our social structure is tending towards this) in this respect she should become equal or superior to man and should begin to play dominant role in the family as man does."[1]

Islam emerged as a religion in the stateless Arabian tribal society where patriarchy was the norm and men enjoyed immense power over women. Polygamy, concubinage, slavery and female infanticide were in practice. However, in the tribal tradition women had 'comparatively a better status' and they were not totally secluded. They enjoyed property rights and sexual freedom. They also had freedom in marriage contract and divorce.[2]

As Islam emerged as a unifying force leading towards state formation, there was a necessity for a codified legal system to consolidate the society. The new religion did not completely abolish the existing social system and form an entirely new one. But, what the Qur'an did was, it prohibited some of the existing practices, such as adultery, fornication and prostitution, banning extra marital sex; restricted free male-female interaction imposing new codes of conducts for men and women. It did not abolish polygamy but discouraged it by imposing restrictions and conditions. It also did not abolish cocubinage through slavery or war captives but encouraged people to free the slaves recommending a new attitude towards slaves, intending the disappearance of slavery in the future. The Qur'an granted women inheritance and property rights and made their consent compulsory for the validity of marriage and also granted them the right for divorce. The Qur'an also stipulated some strict procedures for divorce by men[3] and the Qur'an insists in many places the just treatment of women and social justice to be done to

them as they are a weaker sex since, men dominate the socio-economic affairs of the society.

However as Asgher Ali Engineer points out, after the death of the Prophet, "when Islam spread to Persia and other areas with highly feudalized civilizations, these laws were interpreted in keeping with the social attitudes prevalent among the people there."[4] Patriarchy became dominant and women were completely subordinated and secluded in the name of Islam. Kings and Sultans built their harems to keep their thousands of wives and concubines. Except a few queens and sultanas and women Sufis, Muslim women were unknown in the social, cultural and intellectual fields throughout the medieval period in the Islamic world.

Male chauvinistic interpretation of the Qur'an, without considering the evolutionary nature of the society, and female segregation and subordination prevail in the Islamic world even in the modern age. We have noted in the last chapter, how the Taliban implemented their discriminatory policy against women. Immediately after the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Khomeini regime strictly implemented discriminatory laws against women in the name of Islam. "Islamic dress code was applied and the Islamic veil became mandatory, initially for active women and then more generally among the female population; important limitations were set for women in matters of divorce and child custody; the minimum age of marriage for girls was lowered to nine years; and women's access to judiciary occupations was prohibited. At the same time nation-wide campaign aimed at 'purifying' the public and private sectors of secular women, or what Ayatollah Khomeini called 'corrupt manifestations of the monarchical regime and the West' were orchestrated."[5] Mut'a, the temporary marriage, which was a pre-Islamic practice, amounting to be a legalized prostitution in the modern sense is legally permitted in Iran.

These interpretations and practices give the impression that Islam by nature is inherently discriminatory against women. But there in no unanimous agreement among the *ulama* on this matter.

Even some of the orthodox *ulama* do not agree with these discriminatory interpretations and practices in Islam. For example, Sheikh Ghazali, an influential Islamic scholar of Egypt, published his much controversial book *As Sunna an Nabawiya* in 1989, in which he argues that the Qur'an does not prevent but gives sanction a woman to be the head of a state and he rejects a Hadith that is contradictory with the Qur'anic sanction on the ground that the Qur'an is the supreme authority while the authenticity of the Hadith is questionable.[6]

Some of the Indian *ulama* of the late 19th and early 20th centuries held similar opinions regarding the status of women in Islam. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1864 -1943) of Deoband, a prominent *madrasa* in North India was of the opinion that "if women have inferior status, it is not due to their inherent inferiority - for their soul are the equal of men's - but because of degenerate custom, falsely identified as religion."[7] Sayed Mumtaz Ali (1860-1935) who had his training at Deoband also maintained that, "the distinctions made between men and women that are justified in religious grounds are, in fact, the product of social custom. If these distinctions are subjected to the scrutiny of reason, well bolstered by the knowledge of the religious science, the fallacy and injustice of male supremacy could become clear"[8] Mumtaz Ali founded *Tabzib un-Niswan*, one of the first Urdu journals for women and wrote a book *Huqug un-Niswan* (Women's Right) in defense of women's rights in Islamic Law.[9]

Most of the Islamic modernists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Muslim world also propagated the emancipation of women. Namik Kemal, one of the leaders of the Young Ottomans, a nationalist movement of Turkey wrote in 1867 that:

"Our women are now seen as serving no useful purpose to mankind other than having children; they are considered simply as serving for pleasure, like musical instruments or jewels. But they constitute half and perhaps more than half of our species. Preventing them from

contributing to the sustenance and improvement of others by means of their efforts infringes the basic rules of public cooperation to such a degree that our national society is stricken like a human body that is paralyzed on one side. Yet women are not inferior to men in their intellectual and physical capacities. In ancient times women shared in all men's activities, including even war. In the countryside women still share in the work of agriculture and trade... The reason why women among us are thus deprived is the perception that they are totally ignorant and know nothing of right and duty, benefit and harm. Many evil consequences result from this position of women, the first being that it leads to a bad upbringing for their children."[10]

Casim Ameen, an Egyptian lawyer, wrote two books in Arabic, 'Liberation of Women' (*Tahrir al-mar'a*) in 1899 and 'The New Women' (*Al-mar'a al-jadida*) in 1901. According to Bernard Lewis, the theme of his first book was "the need to raise the condition of women by educating them, and thus giving them access to social life and to professions. In particular, he proposed abolishing the veil and the reinterpretation of the Qur'anic provisions that was usually interpreted as authorizing polygamy, concubinage, and divorce by repudiation. Only by freeing women, he argued, could Muslim society itself be free, since a free society is one in which all its members are free".[11] Jamaluddin Afghani and his disciple Muhammad Abdu also argued for gender equality and interpreted the Qur'an in favour of women.[12]

In the light of the above discussion on the status of women in Islam, now we can look into the status of Sri Lankan Muslim women in the environment of identity politics.

Sri Lankan Muslim Women:
Progress in Education and Employment

Till the beginning of the revivalist period, the existence of the Sri Lankan Muslim women was unknown in public life. They were confined to their homes. Only the revivalists wanted to bring them out of that segregation and challenged the conservative traditional social attitudes and practices to a limited extent. They thought that educating their women was a must for the upward social mobility of the community and tried to open separate schools for Muslim girls to provide modern education to them. Siddhi Lebe was the main propagandist of female education of that time. This was a positive trend among the ethnically motivated, educated Muslim men and political leaders throughout the modern period although there was a strong negative attitude towards female education among the conservative majority till the end of the 1940s.

The last hundred years in the history of Muslim education shows a slow but gradual and steady growth in the education of Muslim girls, although the ethnic ratio is still in a low level. The gradual growth in the literacy rate of the Muslim women shows their progress.

1881	1.5%
1901	3.3%
1921	6.3%
1946	30.0%
1981	70.0%

But it has risen to 75.5% at present. This is a fairly satisfactory development in comparison with the 82.5% overall female literacy in Sri Lanka.

Steps taken at the national level by the governments to promote education in the country had direct impact on Muslim education too. In 1931 primary education was made compulsory and the government opened more schools island wide. In 1945 free education was introduced throughout the country. Muslim political leaders like Razik Fareed, T.B. Jayah, and Baddiuddin Mahmud, and educationists like A.M.A. Azees took some positive steps to promote Muslim education in the country. The establishment of a category of Muslim schools in the 1950s also had a positive impact on Muslim education.

From the 1950s, the number of school going Muslim girls grew steadily. In 1953 their percentage in the Muslim student population was 41.2%, in 1963 it was 45.5% and in 1995 it rose to 47.8%.

Till 1950 most Muslim parents did not want their daughters to continue education beyond the primary level and some of the parents allowed them to continue up to grade 8.

The social attitude was against sending girls to school after puberty and early marriage for girls was prevalent among the Muslims. However, after 1950 the attitude changed gradually owing to the rapid change in the socio-economic and political climate in the country. In 1992 there were 19,575 Muslim students studying in the G.C.E. (O/L) classes and among them 10,718 were boys and 8,857 were girls and their percentage was 54.75% and 45.25% respectively. This trend is increasing and a large numbers of Muslim girls continue their education up to the secondary level and they sit for the G.C.E.(O/L) examination.[13]

Although, at the higher secondary level, that is at the G.C.E. (A/L), the Muslim student population (boys and girls) was only 3.3% in 1992, the male and female numbers almost equal. Out of the total number of 10,870 students 5,476 (50.37%) were boys and 5,394 (49.63) were girls. This shows the progress of female education among the Muslims.

There was similar progress among Muslim girls in the university education too, although their number remained lower than that of the boys. In 1942 only one Muslim female student entered the University of Ceylon, while there were 15 Muslim male students. From 1951 to 1961 the number of the Muslim boys entering the university increased from 51 to 75 while the number of girls increased only from 4 to 10. However, from 1974 the number of Muslim students in the universities visibly increased mainly because of the introduction of the district quota system by the Government for university admission. After 1985 the number of Muslim girls entering the universities continued to increase gradually. The following table shows the details of university enrollment of Muslim girls and boys for the ten academic years from 1989/90 to 1998/99.

Year	Girls	Boys	Total
1989/90	160	270	430
1990/91	176	346	522
1991/92	156	281	437
1992/93	179	222	401
1993/94	193	303	496
1994/95	179	313	492
1995/96	164	260	424
1996/97	150	299	449
1997/98	256	424	680
1998/99	179	452	631

Although the number of Muslim students admitted to the universities has increased over the years, it is far below their national population ratio. For example, the total number of students admitted to the universities for the academic year 1998/99 was 11,309 and out of this only 631 (5.57%) were Muslim students. The Muslim female students constituted only 1.5%. If we compare it with the total female student population in that year - the total number of the girls entered was 6,232 - Muslim girls constituted only 2.77%. Based on the national percentage of the Muslim population (8%) around 1500 Muslim students would have been admitted to the university, and nearly half of them should have been women. In that sense, one can argue that the progress in higher education of Muslim girls and boys at the university level is not satisfactory. It is partly because of the university admission system and partly because of the social factors of the Muslim community.

Social factors including economy, politics, culture and religion, etc., have direct and indirect impact on female education. For example, more Muslim girls opt for the arts courses for their higher education than the other courses. More than 50% of the Muslim girls enter the

Arts Faculties and they outnumber the boys. Although it is a common feature across the ethnic communities, the number of Muslim girls in the other faculties is very low. For example, out of 151 Muslim students attended to the Engineering Faculties from 1980 to 1990, only 4 were girls. And for the same period, out of 52 agricultural students only 9 were girls, out of 164 science students only 13 were girls, out of 95 law students only 23 were girls and out of 107 medical students 38 were girls. This is mainly because of the social attitudes towards education and employment of Muslim girls.[14] As Zulfika has pointed out, the involvement of Muslim girls in higher secondary and tertiary education mostly depends on their family and the immediate social environment than their personal interest.[15] According to her, a fairly large number of female students do not use their opportunity for university education for various socio cultural reasons.[16] According to her study in a leading Muslim girls' schools in Kalmunai, where students enroll from different parts of the country, 44 students got admission to the universities from 1981 to 1988 to different fields of studies including Medicine, Dental, Biological and Physical Sciences, Management and Arts. But, out of the 44, only 19 students utilized their opportunity and the others did not follow the university education.[17] The male dominated socio-cultural environment seems to be the main underlying factor for this situation.

Progress in female education is also determined by the class structure of the society, particularly among the Muslims in Sri Lanka. Majority of the girls who continue their higher secondary and tertiary education come from the educated middle and upper middle class families. The wealthy and the business community are not seriously concerned with their daughters' higher education. They prefer to give them in marriage at a comparatively early age. The lower income labour class cannot afford to give their daughters higher education. Early marriage of boys and girls is more common among this class in the Muslim community. This aspect is not studied in any detail.

If we consider the growth of female literacy, the tremendous increase in the number of school going girls and the increasing number of female students in the universities, we can say that the rise of Muslim identity and Islamism were not obstacles to Muslim female education but was supportive to it, as educating the Muslim women is not against the fundamentals of Islam. However, the extreme Islamists still argue that education means only religious education and secular education is un-Islamic. Although these extreme Islamist individuals and conservative groups are against sending Muslim girls for higher studies in diverse field, it is now socially accepted that Muslim girls should be educated in various fields owing to the inevitable social changes that took place within and outside the Muslim community.

The employment of educated Muslim women was not socially accepted until the beginning of the post-independence period and even today it is not favourably considered by the conservative sections of the community and certain Islamist groups especially the Tabligh Movement. However, religion has not been a strong preventive factor of female employment since socio-economic factors have been more dynamic than religion in this respect.

Until recently, employment for Muslim women was socially restricted to the teaching profession. When Siddi Lebbe started schools for girls in the late 19th century he couldn't find enough teachers to teach. He had to employ teachers from the Burgher community and had to rely on his family members, his sisters to teach and his wife to manage the school. There was only one Muslim female teacher in the Government schools in this country in 1944. However, with the growth of educational opportunities for Muslim women, the number of Muslim female teachers has gradually increased after independence and it was considered by many Muslims that teaching was the proper employment for Muslim women. There are more than 6000 Muslim women in the teaching profession at present and more than 600 of them are graduate teachers. A separate teachers' training college for Muslim women was opened at Aluthgama in

1948. They were also admitted to the Addalaichenai Muslim teachers college as co-trainees with males from 1970s. When the Government started to establish colleges of educations to train teachers in the late 1980, two such colleges were established exclusively for Muslims, one for both men and women at Addalaichenai in 1991 and another for women only at Aluthgama in 1999. Teaching is still regarded as the most convenient job for a Muslim woman.

However, Muslim girls, in considerable numbers, have been willingly seeking various other employment opportunities for the last twenty five years both in the public and private sectors owing to the growth of educational opportunities and the economic condition of the individual families. Now a large number of Sri Lankan Muslim women work as office clerks, bank employees, information technologists, doctors, lawyers engineers and architects. This is a significant advancement in the progress of Muslim women.

Another significant development in the opportunities for employment for Muslim women has been in the Middle East from 1975. Thousands of Muslim women from the low income groups have been migrating to the Middle East as housemaids from almost every village and city for the last thirty years.[18] The economic conditions of these women compel them to migrate leaving their families in Sri Lanka. None of the Islamist movements can prevent this female migration even though they do not approve of it.

Female migration for employment has far-reaching social and cultural implications both positive and negative. On the positive side, it grants freedom of movement and power of decision making and a leading role in the family for Muslim women to a certain extent which are against the Islamists' doctrine. A study by Ameen reveals that most of the women decide on their own to go abroad as housemaids in the hope of earning some money for their future betterment.[19] However, family disorganization, the increasing divorce rate among them and the rather contemptuous social attitudes towards them are some of the negative aspects, and these have to be seriously considered. These women are exploited even sexually by the recruiting agencies and their employers. They are also exploited by their family - their husbands, fathers or guardians.

In my opinion, the ideology of ethnic identity or Islamism does not have any serious negative impact upon Muslim women as far as their education and employment opportunities are concerned. Rather, the emergence of Muslim identity played a positive role in educating Muslim women for the past hundred years which has inevitably led them to seek various employment opportunities. Changing socio-political realities and increasing pressure for finding means of economic survival pushed many women to seek available employment avenues. A large number of Muslim women from the lower income group are involved in various kinds of self employments. Here, Muslim women, like women from other communities, cope with the burden of managing household affairs, bringing up children and earning an income for family upkeep. The conflicting roles allotted to women need to be highlighted. Although mobility (limited in some sense) was approved of for economic reasons there were restrictions on women's decision making role within the household, for instance, consent to marriage. More and more women start working outside the home as a new form of resistance to family control and imposed norms.

Gender Seclusion and Hijab

Ethnic identity and Islamism have played an important role in gender segregation and the subordination of Muslim women in various socio-cultural institutions. It is well known that Sri Lankan Muslim women are heavily dominated by male chauvinistic ideology than women of the other communities in this country, although the degree of domination varies according to social class.

A great majority of religiously-conscious Muslim men believe that they are the custodians of their women, and according to their ideology they have religious sanction for their belief. No religiously sensitive Muslim male accepts the concept of equality of women. To them it is un-Islamic. This ideology of male supremacy leads to the

subordination of women and to a considerable extent the suppression of their identity and the development of their individual personality.

In many ethnically conscious societies, the subordinated women become one of the symbols of their ethnic identity, and the male dominated cultural ideology is imposed upon them and they are expected to behave according to this cultural ideology. Sri Lankan Muslim women are not exceptions to this. They have to accept female segregation and subordination to gain a respectable place in their social system.

Sri Lankan Muslim women were not allowed to leave their homes until the middle of the 20th century. They were secluded and confined to their houses and men looked after their needs.

Even Siddi Lebbe, the revivalist leader who initiated female education and opened schools for Muslim girls, was not liberal and had agreement with the traditional *ulama* in this respect. When Siddi Lebbe met the Governor Havelock at his residence in January 1892 by invitation to discuss Muslim education, the Governor expressed his wish of visiting the Muslim girls' school in Kandy during his conversation with Siddi Lebbe. But Siddi Lebbe told the Governor that since, it was a girls' school and run by exclusively women they would not appreciate the male visitors but Lady Havelock's visit would be appreciated.[20] Ameen cites this incident with great appreciation of how Siddi Lebbe was serious about protecting the Islamic environment even against the wish of the Governor, with whose support he expected to run the school.[21] One may wonder whether, Siddi Lebbe himself visited the school.

Ameen cites another incident, from Muslim Nesan, which was reported on 11th of February 1886. When the Government quarantined young Muslim women and men together due to the infectious disease in Colombo, the Jamiyatul Islamiya, led by Siddi Lebbe strongly protested this act since it was un-Islamic to put Muslim men and women in a common place.[22]

Women's participation at funerals and weddings and at *kanduri* festivals were severely condemned by Siddi Lebbe in his Muslim

Nesan. He also wrote that it was *haram* for women to bathe in rivers and ponds where men also bathed.[23] These incidents show how the Muslim men were concerned about female seclusion and tried to preserve it.

However, Siddi Lebbe in his novel Asanbey Saritiram portrays some liberal images of male female relationship, although his ideology was basically male dominated. Three of his female characters, Shamsunnihar, Julaiha and Maimoon, have been created as positive Muslim young girls. They behave independently. Shamsunnihar and Julaiha fall in love with Abdul Samad and Abdul Hameed respectively. Shamsunnihar even leaves her home in search of her lover since her parents wanted to give her in marriage to another person. On her way she meets Asan and tells her story and goes with him by ship from Egypt to Beirut several days' long travel on the sea to meet her lover Abdul Samad. When she first meet Asan she puts her veil on her face and when they get acquainted and develop a mutual trust and friendship she removes her veil and talks to him face to face.[24] This may be a fictional reality for Siddi Lebbe, but in real life he also insisted on female seclusion.

In the late 1920s the young M.C.M. Kaleel, who later would become one of the prominent Muslim leaders, returned from the University of Edinburgh as a doctor with some enlightened ideas and he was given a reception in Colombo. "In that meeting Kaleel said that Muslim females would not get adequate education so long as they were secluded in purdah. The abolition of the purdah system was a prerequisite for the advancement of Muslim women and the Muslim community."[25] Obviously it was a radical stand at the time. No Muslim leader dared to say like that in the present context. The whole ulama and the educated elder generation were against him. One maulavi Ibrahim "launched a virulent attack on the 'English educated young men who forgot their religion' and another maulavi N.D. Abdul Razzak "took the cue and quoted the Holy Qur'an and Hadith to support the maulavi's view point. Another advocate for strict purdah, proctor N.H. Haniffa said that Muslim women

should be given religious education and should be taught domestic sciences."[26] Dr. Kaleel was not allowed to reply. "There was much commotion over the hornet's nest that had been disturbed, and controversy raged wildly, with the educated young men siding Dr. Kaleel, and the elders voicing their distaste for this new thinking. The meeting broke up and Dr. Kaleel did not attend the dinner, that was to follow the meeting and at which he was to be the chief guest"[27] This incident is one of the examples that show the rigidity of the Islamists and their hold on women.

With the introduction of universal franchise in 1931 women in general and the Muslim women in particular received a political recognition and a value in public life for the first time in the history of modern Sri Lanka. It was demonstrated in the first general election to the State Council held in 1931 under the Donoughmore constitution. Muslim women came out from their seclusion legitimately with religious sanction. Mohamed Macan Markar from Colombo contested the Batticaloa seat where Muslims were densely concentrated and he wanted the women's vote for win. He brought a number of *ulamas* from Colombo and Galle to issue a *fatwa* that "women could go out and cast their votes."[28] As Thawfeeq noted "this was the first occasion when Muslim women went out to cast their votes."[29] The event can also be interpreted, as Zakariya and Shanmugaratnam did, "as legitimizing women's secluded state."[30] Issuing a *fatwa* means that 'you can come out for a specific purpose; otherwise you have to be in seclusion.' However, the universal franchise provided women a space to legitimately break their seclusion.

A similar incident is reported by Thawfeeq, again in 1942, ten years after the first incident. This time Dr. M.C.M. Kaleel contested at the by-election in Colombo. He was the only Muslim who contested and the others were from the majority community. Kaleel won the election by 2085 majority votes. According to Thawfeeq, "in this election Muslim ladies came out of their secluded purdah to cast their votes in large numbers. Mr. N.D.M. Abdul Careem

provided them with a number of *heavily curtained cars, so that they may observe their cherished purdah while coming to the polling station.*"[31] Although they came out for voting they had to be heavily curtained even in the 1940s. However, the situation has changed during the last fifty years. The age of complete seclusion is gone. Thousands of Muslim women now go by foot and stay in the queues to cast their votes in every election. It is a common scene that many Muslim women traveling from place to place using public transport. They go to work places, schools, tutories, universities and hospitals. They also go shopping and marketing. They visit friends, neighbours and relatives who live in distant places. They also go abroad as migrant workers. Muslim women from the lower income group had never been secluded. They even work as agricultural labourers in the Ampara district. Thus a large number of Muslim women go out of their houses for various purposes as the women from the other communities. This is the present reality. This is due to the inevitable social changes that took place not only in Sri Lanka but all over the Islamic world throughout the 20th century. In some countries it took place a little early and in some other countries a little late.

Nevertheless, the concept of female seclusion and *hijab* is deeply rooted in the Muslim mind particularly among the *ulama* and the Islamists. As they have realized that the complete seclusion of women is not possible in contemporary societies as in those old days, they reinvented the *hijab* and imposed it on women as the Islamic dress for them in the way they understood it.

Hijab means modesty, in dress and behaviour. The Qur'anic concept of hijab should be understood in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabian context.

In the pre-Islamic days there was a ritualistic practice among the Arab men and women going round (*tawaf*) the *ka'ba* in a naked state as a form of worship and they believed that it was the tradition of their forefathers and the Qur'an denounced it. (7:27, 28) In this context the Qur'anic insistence of dress and modesty is important. The Qur'anic concept of modesty applies equally to male and female

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behaviour. However, the Qur'an in pragmatic terms instructs modesty in female dress and women are advised to use their over garment for their safety to avoid being molested (33:59) and the Qur'an did not prescribe complete veil for women. However, the Qur'an gives more importance to the righteousness of men and women than their dress. The Qur'an clearly says: "Children of Adam, we have given you clothing with which to cover your shame and pleasing to the eye, but finest of all these is the clothing of righteousness (7:26). Here the Qur'an uses a metaphor 'the clothing of righteousness' and the metaphorical meaning is very important here. It tells us, dress in any modesty is not a guarantee for righteousness or piety, it should come from within, and purdah or veil is not a scale for one's righteousness or piety. If you are unable to guard your piety your purdah or veil won't be able to guard it.

However, the hijab is considered the sign of a good Islamic woman in the cotemporary Muslim world and it has taken different forms from headscaves to complete veil. Until the colonization of the Islamic countries by the European powers, one or another kind of hijab was observed by Muslim women everywhere. During the colonial period due to the impact of European culture and modernization/westernization this practice was gradually disappearing among Muslim women particularly in the urban areas. The hijab was also officially banned in some of the Muslim countries, in Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and in Iran by Reza Pahlevi Shah in 1935, particularly the chador, the black outer garment that covers the whole body.[32]

The Islamists reinvented the hijab after 1960 and it gained a new meaning in the Islamic world because of the mobilization of the masses against Western imperialism and the local dictatorial states that were considered the stooges of imperialism in the post-colonial Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East. Some of the Palestinian liberation movements also contributed to it. This political mobilization was inseparably linked with Islam, and Islam became a powerful political force with the extremist ideology of Islamism or Islamic fundamentalism in West Asia and in some African countries. Women in hijab became symbol of Muslim identity.

During the Islamic revolution in Iran in the 1970s the hijab was also used as a symbol of political resistance. Iranian women have a long tradition of political involvement. In the 1906-1911 constitutional revolution, Iranian women played an important role.[33] During the Islamic revolution of the 1970s thousands of Iranian women wearing chador got down to the streets shouting slogans against the Shah. The whole west was watching it over the television channels. Wearing the chador was banned by the state and the women used it as a form of political defiance.[34]

Immediately after the victory, Imam Khomeini returned to the country on 3rd February 1979. "There were placards and posters all over Iran saying "we honour the women of Iran"; and he publicly thanked the women of Iran for their contribution without which the revolution would not have taken place. Then he said "we honour these women and now would they please go home!" that was the very first edict issued by Ayatollah Khomeini. "The next was an assumption that all these good Iranian women would forever wear the chador. So something which they had taken on as the symbol of their freedom became a symbol of their bondage. They no longer had the freedom to take it off, because if they did acid was thrown on their face or other terrible things were done."[35] The Islamist Iran, however, could not totally seclude the women. They continue to play significant roles in the socio cultural and political life of the country.

The Iranian Islamic revolution was one of the important factors for the reintroduction of hijab in its Middle Eastern form all over the Muslim world. The concept of hijab has been indoctrinated in the Muslim mind by the Islamists. Now it has been reinforced as a symbol of Muslim Identity and also as an aspect of fundamental right.

Sri Lankan Muslim women did not observe *purdah*, in its present form as the Islamic dress for women, until very recently.

They observed *hijab* in their traditional way. It was their tradition to cover their heads with the head piece of their sari, known as *mukkaadu* in Tamil. It was a common practice in North India even among Hindu women who came under Mogul influence. It was considered a satisfactory practice of *hijab* for Muslim women to cover their heads with the *mukkaadu* when they appear in public places. The educated and employed Muslim women did not observe even this *mukkaadu*.

However, the situation changed in the 1980s, the Middle Eastern types of hijab were gradually introduced among Sri Lankan women because of the intensification of ethnic consciousness due to the mounting ethnic tension and the rise of Islamism to a higher stage. The international Islamic resurgence motivated by the Iranian Islamic revolution had a great impact on this.

Owing to this new development Sri Lankan Muslim women were compelled to wear hijab since the early 1980s and it has become the school uniform for Muslim girls since the late 1980s in all Muslim schools except in the primary classes. The Muslim girls who attend non-Muslim schools also have to observe *hijab*. Anonymous letters were sent to certain schools in the Ampara district by some Islamist groups threatening female teachers who were not observing hijab to expect severe punishment for their un-Islamic behaviour. All the employed Muslim women were psychologically compelled to wear *hijab*. In the Universities only a few Muslim girls covered their heads in the 1970s. But during the last twenty five years it has become obligatory to observe hijab and at present almost all the female Muslim students observe it. Most of the male students and some Islamist organizations are vigilant about this. Various types of *hijab* are in use among the women. The school uniform is white with a head cover. *Habaya* in different colours and styles is getting popularity among young and middle aged women. Some of the women wear only a headscarf with their normal dress. Some extreme Islamist groups like Tabligh Jamaat promote the complete veil with gloves and socks.

Although some of the women complain of headache and other health problems caused by the hijab, especially during the peak of the summer season, it has become an obligatory social practice for both upper and middle class Muslim women. It has even become a status symbol for the upper class women in urban areas. Hence, the imposition of hijab can be considered a victory of Islamists over Sri Lankan Muslim women. However, a few highly educated and assertive Muslim women who live in cosmopolitan cities like Colombo can afford not to observe the hijab. Women from the lower income groups who are outside the domination of Islamism can also behave differently.

Although, the *hijab* was reintroduced by the Islamist males as the Islamic dress for women and imposed upon them, it has also become an inalienable cultural symbol of Muslim identity and is increasingly gaining popularity among Muslim women internationally including in the West. It has also become an aspect of fundamental rights, the Muslims can fight for to retain it and many Muslim women observe *hijab* from their own conviction.

Some recent studies on *hijab* reveal that it is a complex phenomenon in the global context. Although it is a constraint on women, they also gain some thing from it. For Iranian women, the veil is a price they have to pay "in exchange for the security, stability and presumed respect," and "the young women who adopt veil in Egypt are concerned with retaining 'respectability' and 'untouchability', given their increased presence in public space."[36] Fatima Mernissi observes that "In the streets and places of work, and particularly in schools and universities, an increasing portion of young women were covering their hair if not their faces and avoiding social and professional mixing with men. By what might seem a paradox, this was more a sign of their assertion of their own identity than the power of the male."[37] Helen Watson observes that " it is possible to see the return to the veil as part of women's personal and political struggle against the status quo, as well as a symbolic struggle for the improvement of existing conditions."[38]

A Sri Lankan women's group's study states that: "It is interesting to note that the "hijab" seems to have given women some degree of freedom of movement. In the Eastern province young women in hijab are seen riding bicycles and even in other parts of the country travelling alone by bus seems to be permitted if one wears hijab. One of the field researchers came across young women traveling from Beruwela to Colombo (approx. 50 km) daily for tuition classes. A phenomenon that was unheard of especially from this area some years ago."[39]

Polygamy and Women

The Islamist interpretation of the Qur'an is always in favour of male domination and beneficial to males. Their interpretation of polygamy is a good example of this. Polygamy is a pre-Islamic practice in the male dominated Arabian society and exists in many patriarchal communities all over the world.[40] It is a form of social institution, favorable to men, and allows a man to have many wives at a time. It came into practice at a particular historical period of social evolution.

Although, the Qur'an did not prohibit this pre-Islamic practice of polygamy, it imposed strict restrictions on it. It prevents a man, irrespective of his wealth and social position, to have not more than four wives at a time, and also imposes a condition that he should treat his wives equally. The Qur'anic verse that grants men permission to have more than one wife at a time, occurs in the context where it speaks about the care of orphans (4:2-3) and it is not an open permission to men. In another verse the Qur'an categorically says " You are never be able to be fair and just as between women, if it is your ardent desire" (4:129). The Qur'an also advises a man not to marry a woman if he is economically not in a position to support her (24:33). This was obviously a progressive step at a time when men were enjoying unlimited supreme power over women. This clearly shows that the spirit of Islam is not in favour of polygamy, though the Qur'an allows it with restrictions. It was in this interpretation of the Qur'an the Tunisian government abolished polygamy in 1956.[41]

However, the Islamists interpret the Qur'an in favour of polygamy and defend polygamous practices as inherent nature and the inalienable right of the male and even go to the extent of saying that it is necessary for the advancement of human civilization. The fundamentalists who follow the Shia doctrine not only defend polygamy but also practice Mut'a, the temporary marriage which is also a pre Islamic practice that can be considered as legitimized prostitution in the modern sense. Many of the wealthy Muslim males from the Middle East misuse the Islamic provision of polygamy and divorce. They go to India and other countries in search of beautiful young girls from poor families and get married to them, live with them in posh hotels for a short period and divorce them according to the religious provisions. There are several such cases reported in Kerala.

Although polygamy is religiously admitted, it is not a socially acceptable practice among Muslims in Sri Lanka and the indigenous cultural tradition of Sri Lankan Muslims is not in favour of the Islamist attitude in respect of polygamy. However, there are some isolated cases of polygamy observable among Sri Lankan Muslims. It is interesting to note that Sri Lankan Islamists, though they defend polygamy in principle, are with a few exceptions monogamous in practice by local tradition. However, some fundamentalists propagate polygamy for their own benefit.

Another area of fundamentalist interpretation in favour of male domination is the Islamic personal law which covers marriage, divorce and inheritance. Fundamentalists all over the Islamic world consider this to be an inalienable part of Sharia which is divine in nature and oppose any modern rational interpretations and change in order to give equal status to women.

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad a rational interpreter of the Qur'an usefully differentiates Deen from Sharia in his book Dharjumanul Qur'an. According to him, Deen represents the basic principles and value system of Islam which are universal and Sharia represents the laws and code of conducts of Islamic communities

which are not universal and vary from time to time and place to place according to the historical and social conditions of the Muslim communities.[42] This is evident in the existence of different schools (Madhabs) and interpretations of Sharia.

For example, according to the Hanafi School a woman can divorce her husband only on the ground of sexual impotency. But the Shafi and other schools permit her to ask for divorce on several other grounds also. According to the Shafi School which is practiced in Sri Lanka, a woman cannot be appointed as a judge to a Quazi Court, and this is strictly followed here. However, in Pakistan where the Hanafi School is practiced a woman can be appointed as Quazi and also in Indonesia, where the Shafi School is in practice. However, Sri Lankan fundamentalists are rigid and are not in favour of a significant change in Muslim personal law. It is a paradoxical situation that the fundamentalists do not allow Muslim women to be appointed as Quazis in their Sharia Courts while there are some Muslim women already working as judges and lawyers in Sri Lankan civil courts.

Another area under the influence of Islamism is that of performing arts like music, drama and film. According to the Sri Lankan version of Islamism these are un-Islamic and the Islamists are particularly against women's participation in any performing arts and Sri Lankan Muslim women are denied the opportunity of developing their talents in the fine arts, through which the human personality and perception can also be developed. Only girls, who have not attained puberty, are allowed to participate in cultural performances on the school or public stage.

In the mid-1970s when aesthetic education was introduced in the school curriculum Badiuddin Mahmud, the then Education Minister and a widely accepted Muslim political leader who contributed much to the development of Muslim education in this country, introduced the concept of Islamic music and dance and appointed Muslim women to teach these aesthetic subjects in Muslim schools. However, he had to face strong protests from Islamist circles for his initiative and the project was abandoned immediately.

In this context, Muslim women's participation in film and drama is ruled out. A few years ago some tele-dramas were produced with Muslim female characters and telecast over the Rupavahini, the national television station. They were stopped later under fundamentalist pressure. However, the Islamists are not against women's participation in radio broadcasting since it is a non-visual medium; as a result we have a few talented Muslim female radio artistes in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Islamists are not willing to take into consideration the cultural practices in the Islamic world even in Iran. It is well known that the Islamist Iran has become one of the finest film producing countries in the world and has produced several talented actresses, female singers, painters and even film directors. However, the Sri Lankan Islamists, who have their own interpretation of Islam and who suffer from a minority complex have the fear that if they allow their women to get out of their control Muslim society as a whole would collapse.[43]

In this context, women's participation in politics and public affairs is highly restricted. According to a study in the late 1990s by a Muslim women group "Sri Lankan electoral history has seen very few Muslim women participating actively in politics. In 1947 a Muslim woman contested the local government election and won it and became the Deputy Mayor of Colombo in 1954. In 1991, yet another woman contested the local election and was elected as a member of the Galle Municipal Council. In the recent past no Muslim woman has come forward to contest parliamentary election but the local government election in 1997 saw three Muslim women contesting, one in Colombo, one in Galle and other in a suburb of Colombo, but all three were unsuccessful."[44] However, in the early 2000 two Muslim women, Mrs. Ferial Ashraf and Anjan Umma entered parliament from two opposing political parties, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and Janada Vimukti Peramuna (JVP). Mrs. Farial Ashraf, the widow of the late M.H.M. Ashraf, the founder of the SLMC and NUA (The National United Alliance)

later became the leader of NUA and an important cabinet ranking minister and proved that Muslim women can hold any high position if proper opportunity is given. However, the attitude of the male dominated Muslim society is not conducive and encouraging to women's participation in politics. No Muslim women from the Eastern province has ever participated either in local government or parliamentary election although they are actively involved in election campaigns and voting.[45]

End Notes and References

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2. Engineer, Asghar Ali, (1990), pp.183-4.
3. See, Qur'an, 2:224-232.
4. Engineer, Asghar Ali, (1990), p.89.
5. Azadeh Kian, (1994), p.34.
6. Fatima Mernissi, (1999)
7. Gail. Minault, (1998), p.143.
8. Ibid. p.145.
9. Ibid.
10. Quoted in Lewis, Bernard (2003), p.78.
11. Ibid. p.79, 185.
12. For Abdu's stand on women see, Anas, M.S.M. (2001), pp.145-151.
13. The statistics given in this study collected and calculated from various sources. Mainly from Hasbullah, S.H. and Shaifudeen, N.M.(2000) and Jezeema, H. (2005)
14. Zulfika, Fathima. (2000), p. 51.
15. Ibid. p.52.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid. p.54.
18. See Kiruga Fernando (1990) for some useful information on the migration of female labourers.
19. Ameen, M.I.M. (1995)
20. Ameen, M.I.M., (2000), p.117.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid. p.134.
23. Ameen, M.I.M., (1997), pp.61-62.
24. Siddi Lebbe, (1990). Pp.130-135.
25. Thawfeeq, (1986), p.15.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid. p. 20.
29. Ibid.
30. Zakariya, F. and Shanmugaratnam, N. (1997), p.30.
31. Thawfeeq, (1986), P.27. Emphasize added.
32. Dilip Hiro, (1989), p.152.
33. Lewis, Bernard (2003), p.106.
34. WLUML (1997), *For Ourselves: Women reading the Qur'an*, p.216.
35. Ibid.
36. Watson, Helen (1994), pp.141-142.
37. Ibid. p.152.
38. Ibid. p.156.
39. MWRAF/WLUML, (1999), *Between Two Worlds: Muslim Women in a Multi-Ethnic Society*, p.53.
40. Murdock, (1957)
41. Charfi, Mohamed, (2005), p.89.
42. Azad , Maulana Abdul Kalam (1980), pp. 351-4.
43. A leading maulavi, a senior member of the Jamaat e Islami expressed this view personally to the author.
44. MWRAF/WLUML, (1999), p. 56.
45. Ibid.

Conclusion

Ethnic identity is an exclusive ideology that divides people into different, opposing and rival ethnic groups. The ideology of ethnic identity has its roots in particular socio-political and historical conditions in a plural society that experiences economic and political disparity.

The history of late-colonial and post-colonial Sri Lanka is also a history of ethnic conflict that led to the polarization of ethnic communities, although we witness political alliances and re-alliances between the elites of these ethnic communities for their political survival during the post-independence period.

The Sri Lankan Muslim identity is a reactive politico-cultural ideology that was constructed and evolved in response to the Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalism from the late 19th century.

The Sri Lankan Muslims are basically a heterogeneous community like other communities, although there is a growing homogenizing tendency within the community motivated by ethnic tension due to the prevailing socio-political conditions of the country. It is in this context that the overarching Muslim identity has evolved within their cultural diversity.

Although, there are regional, sectarian and political divisions and conflicts within the Muslim community as in any other communities in the country, the overarching Muslim identity is always visible and dominates the community as it is assumed that the Muslim interests are under thereat or in conflict with the interests of the other ethnic communities in the North-East and also in the South.

Ethnic identities are reactive and have reciprocal impact on each other and create ethnic rivalries, tensions and conflicts. Ethnic tensions and conflicts can be neutralized only through political process, which would grant equal opportunities and democratic rights to each community to enable them to develop independently with mutual interaction. Granting of equal rights is a precondition for social integration and ethnic harmony.

In Sri Lanka it is widely believed that the ethnic conflict is restricted and confined only to the North and East, which is a misconception. It is true that the ethnic conflict has reached the highest stage of separatism in the North and East, but it does not mean that there is no ethnic problem in the Southern provinces. No province or district in Sri Lanka is exclusively mono-ethnic. In the North and East the Tamils are the majority and the Muslims and Sinhalese are minorities. In the Southern provinces the Sinhalese are the majority and the Muslims and Tamils are minorities. The Muslims and Sri Lankan Tamils are distributed in all the southern provinces in a scattered fashion. The Indian Tamils are mainly concentrated in three provinces of the plantation areas of the Hill Country and they also have developed a separate ethnic identity. All these minority communities have experienced communal violence against them and do not have a sense of security and freedom and it is their psychological reality. It is widely accepted even by the relevant government institutions that they are deprived of their language rights. They also complain of discrimination in education and employment opportunities.

A meaningful peace process and the political solution to the ethnic problem should not be restricted only to the North and East but should also be extended to the South as well. In a civilized society people of any ethnic minority, whether they are territorial or non-territorial should not feel that they are discriminated or marginalized. They should enjoy equal rights and equal

opportunities. They have the right to develop themselves freely and to safeguard their cultural and political rights without any hindrance to the other communities. This may seem to be a utopian ideal in a country of ethnic conflicts. But, equality is a precondition for peace and peace is a precondition for freedom. This precondition applies to a family, a community, a country and the whole world to maintain harmonious relationship.

If we want to meaningfully resolve the ethnic problems and conflicts and to neutralize the ethnic tension between the ethnic communities and to create ethnic harmony and peaceful coexistence, equality between ethnic communities should be guaranteed and our political motto should be:

Equality Peace and Freedom

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