

Biased Community of Sri Lanka

- Civil Activists of Sri Lanka will unapologetically criticize if a Buddhist monk or a Sinhala nationalist commit any religious violence or an act above the rule of law. But they have no guts to challenge the religious punishments given by mosque federations. Whipping (100 strokes), for adulterers or caning (80 strokes) punishments for those who married with non-Muslims or even have love affairs with non-Muslims, have occurred with the involvement of Muslim mosques and with the great support of Muslim community. And some girls who are subjected to sexual harassment forced to marry their harassers. This has occurred even without informing the police about the incidents. We heard only such things only from Arab in the past, and now we have been unfortunate to hear such news even from here. And in the future, we may hear killing apostates also. Islamists have so dared to openly challenge the law of the land and act considering them as the sole authority regarding every matter of the lives of Muslims and sole authorities of Muslim majority areas without the slightest respect to laws of the country. Such punishments are breach of human rights and a religious violence though among themselves, harmful to religious harmony and multiculturalism (punishing adults those who love or marry with other faith groups is a form of hate and intolerance towards them. But those who are able to see the racism of boycotting Muslim shops are unable to see racism behind hatred and violence against those who marry or love non-Muslims!) All these are values highly concerned by the so-called “civil” community. But they will allow such acts if done by minorities and berate if done by a Sinhalese or a Buddhist. Hyshama Hameen and Hasana Cegu Isadheen write in their study [“Unequal citizens: Muslim women’s struggle for justice and equality”](#) *“From FGD’s it was gathered that flogging punishments on persons suspected of adultery is occurring at the community level, either commissioned by mosque committees and mosque federations. ...Civil society groups working in the areas stated that the community perceives the practice as a norm and a legal and legitimate punishment as part of Sharia and therefore allowed under the MMDA, hence it has not been questioned or challenged.”* why they have no guts to challenge such extremist behaviors by Muslims while they are criticizing slightest racist comment/hate speech by Sinhalese or Buddhists? Answer: Because they are so biased.
- They see the influence of Mahavamsa (the notion that Sri Lanka is exclusively Sinhala-Buddhist country chosen by Buddha and portrayal of Tamils as invaders) to the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka. But they are unable to see Tamil’s mentality which motivated them to fight and oppose even to choosing representatives based on provinces instead of choosing based on ethnicity. Geopolitical background of North (political and cultural influences coming from Tamilnadu to the Sri Lanka North) and most importantly nostalgia for

the so-called past Tamil Kingdom in Yapanaya which can't be neglected when considering the causes for Tamil liberation struggle though the academia and civil community have neglected them. And they are trying to begin the story from 'Sinhala Only Act' forgetting Tamils reactions before that. One must read [this article](#) by Malinda Senevirathne on this matter also.

- They will act valiantly against hate speech, riots, misuse of ICCPR law against minorities, and limiting the cultural rights of Muslims by laws, using emergency situations as excuses. But they have no such pity for innocent-rural-Sinhala-Buddhists who had to see and stand by idly how some of the archaeological Buddhist sites and temples have been encroached by minorities.

**Report of the Buddha Sasana Presidential Commission -2002,
Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

Buddhist Sacred Objects and Archaeological Monuments (Chapter 6)

12.39 It was revealed in evidence that the lands belonging to the Muhudu Mahaviharaya in Panamapattuva and the historic Buddhist sacred site in Kuragala, Balangoda had been encroached by the Muslim community. The lands belonging to these two religious places should be recovered and the two sites should be conserved in a manner that their sanctity is preserved. (6.16)

Imagine how those civil activists will react if they heard such things have happened to Muslims or Tamils? (Encroaching or destroying a Muslim or Hindu religious site by Sinhalese/Buddhists) And compare how they maintained silence about encroaching religious sites of Buddhists? On one hand, they'll label anyone Buddhist who is talking about injustices they had to face and berate them for spreading hate against minorities or sharing fake news. But on the other hand, they do not take the responsibility of protecting the heritages of these Buddhist sites. According to the view of "civil" activists, they should only be care about injustices to minorities. It's fair to take away religious rights from Buddhists. It's civil to do so. Such acts are uncivil if only done by majority groups. They are allowing and accepting such acts because they are thinking its "civil" to be certain communities to face such injustices. That's why they support these acts by keeping themselves silent and making others also silent by declaring them as racists.

- They [criticize even the film "යශෝධරා"](#) by Sunil Ariyaratna for containing and promoting patriarchal ideology. But the writer of that review (Aruni Samarakone) or Vikalpa.org hasn't written a single word about Quranic verses (4:34, 2:223, 4: 24) and Hadees ([Sahih Muslim 4:2127](#), [Sahih al-Bukhari 5825](#), [Sahih al-Bukhari 3237](#), [Sahih al-Bukhari 7099](#)) promoting violence or oppression towards women and oppression of women in Muslim community due to those religious ideologies. Which is more severe? Oppression based on Yashodhara's story or oppression based on Islamic rules on women? Anyone who lived in this society will admit that there's no oppression of women inspired by Yashodhara's story but there is a very dark side in the Sri Lankan Muslim community thanks to misogyny and regulations regarding women in Islam. Aruni Samarakone has no guts to write about greater discrimination towards women in this society promoted by a religion, and she knows that this inability is detrimental to her portrayal as a civil activist, so she decides to attack the community and teachings which is very innocent instead than attacking the community (and doctrine) more oppressive towards women to console herself on at least she's honest in her cause. Most Sinhala-Buddhist civil activists attack their own culture so ruthlessly because they have no valor to challenge to much severe attributes of other cultures. Because they want to do something to erase the guilt in their minds being so politically impotent and being so dishonest to their own cause. So even in the limited instances which they are writing about such acts by minorities, they do it restricting themselves and using an apologetic tone opposed to their much confident approach when criticizing Sinhalese and Buddhist monks (I myself know this mentality since I too was in this category in my teens.)
- They said that Sinhala and Buddhist symbols (like Lion in the national flag, Bo leaves in the national flag and the foremost place given to Buddhism in the constitution) [are reasons for violence in Sri Lanka](#). They see influence by Sinhala-Buddhist Nationalism which is endorsed by Mahavamsa, ideas of Anagarika Dharmapala to ethnic and religious riots in Sri Lanka. So they suggested that we should ban the stickers like “ශ්‍රී ලංකාව බුදුන්ගේ දේශය යි” and should remove the constitutional state of Buddhism and symbols in national flag to curb the Sinhala Buddhist racism. Now terrorist groups are forming from the Sri Lankan Muslim community. But they don't see [any relationship of the Islamic prophet's life](#) and conduct with that terrorism though [they are able to see the relationship with Dharmapala and current-day riots/racism](#). Not only former Muslims and activists like Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ali Rizwi, but also the highest Islamic scholar of Indonesia also [say that there is a link between Islam and terrorism](#).
- There are many studies done on the “mentality” behind the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism or its trends or factors led to it, perceiving it as some “sickness of the mind” of Sinhala-Buddhists. Gananatha Obeysekera, Serena Thennakoon, Kumari Jayawardena, Social Scientists Association of Sri Lanka, and Center

for Policy Alternative have done so many researches in such an attitude. But have any of them done a single research on changes of Sri Lankan Muslims' attitudes, their attraction towards fundamental elements or ideologies within Islam? At least a Muslim activist like Ayesha Suhair? If they analyzed the dynamics of Islamic politics and Islamism, we would have been able to identify the threat of Islamic extremism and terrorism of the country, long before it comes to its peak. But deep-rooted bias (over sympathy towards minorities and thinking that it's Sinhala-Buddhists who are always going wrong) of these so-called liberals did not let them see concerns raised by Sinhala nationalist movements as a protective reaction to a future threat or to an ongoing fundamentalist change within the Muslim community. Instead, they interpreted it as seeking a new enemy to fill the void created after the ending Tamil enemy. And labeled anyone who comes with this concern as a racist and xenophobic and a Muslim hater.

- They criticize the Mahavamsa for giving foundations to ongoing racism in the country. They do see how these mythical stories give the foundation to violence towards minorities and how they give power to majoritarian domination. They did not hesitate to criticize and to condemn the Galagodaaththe Ganasara, Warakagoda Ganarathana for their hate speeches, and Ampitiye Sumanarathana for his intolerant behavior. But these very same intellectuals do not criticize when the same (or worse) hate speeches, intolerant behaviors found within a religion which have more power to persuade the followers (because they are considered as divinely inspired)than above figures. For instance, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has said some statements ([Sahih al-Bukhari 25](#), [Sahih Muslim 2922](#)) regarding non-Muslims and committed intolerant behaviors towards other religions ([Sahih al-Bukhari 4287](#)), which can't be justified even in a context of war for self-defense. If the Mahavamsa says something, we can persuade Buddhists to discredit it using Buddhism. If a racist monk promotes violence towards Muslims we can discredit him using the very religion of Buddhism. But how can we discredit violence promoted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) without denouncing/criticizing him? This is more dangerous than majoritarianism in the Mahavamsa or violence by the Duttagamini or hate speeches by Buddhist monks since unlike them Muhammad is considered a saintly figure and his words are infallible. Yet they criticize only the Mahavamsa and racist monks but not Islam or Muhammad. Not only that, anyone who comes with this concern will be an Islamophobe. It's fair to use Mahavamsa to understand Sinhala-racism, but it's racist to use to the same approach to understand Islamic extremism (evaluate the impact of violent Hadees like [Sahih al-Bukhari 25](#)) and it's a crime.

Sachintha Madhushan