

A Qualitative Analysis on Historicizing Nationalist Discourse of the Origins of the Communities of Sri Lanka among the Contemporary Sinhalese

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Abstract— In the post-war reconciliation context, the Sri Lankans need to develop constructive discourse on political harmony, cohesion and co-habitation to make a positive impact on legislative changes towards post-conflict reconciliation, sustainable peace and justice. Ideological discourse constitutes power in constructing ideational, textual and interpersonal constructs for legitimizing power in society. This paper qualitatively analyses the exemplified discourse extracts of some prominent contemporary Sinhalese, which represent majoritarianism and ethno-nationalism regarding the origins of the Sinhala and Tamil communities and the consequent status availed to their existence in Sri Lanka. The study focuses, with the historiographical evidence, on whether such discourse has been a part of the problem or a part of the solution to the protracted, historically constructed Sri Lankan conflict. It finds out the continuation of such persistent and reiterated linguistically embedded ethno-centric ideological and attitudinal positions even now, which need to be addressed. This paper recommends awareness creation among the public about the true, scientifically derived historical information on the origins, evolution and inter-community co-existence and conflict of the two communities so that a durable solution can be reached in the long run.

Keywords— conflict, discourse, ethno-nationalism, ideology, legitimization, Sinhalese, Tamil

I. INTRODUCTION

THE socio political struggle between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka has been strongly rooted in ‘the social construction’ of Sri Lankan history of many centuries during the pre-colonial era and of the origins of these two communities and of many decades during the post-colonial era, based on the religious, ethnic and linguistic ideologies of the two communities but the present conflict dates back from immediately after the colonial period as a consequence of the two foregone eras.

The consequent contemporary conflict is the result of the ‘historicism’ and ‘nationalism’ ideologically ‘constructed’ due to the historical records produced by both the early and contemporary historians and the subjective interpretations by the community intellectuals. The impartial historiographical studies based on real archaeological and anthropological evidence confirm that most of the sensitive historical events of the origins and conflicts of the communities recorded are deprived of any reliable, systematic and scientific evidence.

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The conflict was constructed when the Sinhala historians recorded that the Sinhalese are from North India during the fifth century BC but the Tamils came from South India rather late with a different language and religion. During the course of this time, the political, cultural and territorial disputes caused a protracted ideological divide between the ethnic groups. Later, the governance of the colonialist rulers such as Dutch, Portuguese, and British was perceived as partial by both the ethnic groups within the island.

During the post-independent period from 1948, Tamils felt discriminated due to the government policies and began to resist. All the democratic and non-violent resistant movements failed, disappointed, the armed resistance by the Tamil youth began. The Sinhalese fought to maintain control over Sri Lanka and the Tamils fought against discrimination and for representation in political affairs. During this post-war era, though the armed conflict was brought to an end, the political conflict still continues to claim the political rights of the minority communities in Sri Lanka and finally reach a post-conflict resolution sustainable.

II. OBJECTIVES

The research problem revolves around the historicized nationalist discourse constructions of the Sinhalese about the origins of the communities which are not founded on the historical facts buttressed by proper archeological and anthropological evidence. They are ideological. Even the Sri Lankan Sinhala elite people and the media either make explicit statements or “hide or express their ideological and attitudinal positions in subtle and mild forms” [49]. The objectives are:

To qualitatively analyze the exemplified discourse extracts of some prominent contemporary Sinhalese representing majoritarianism and ethno-nationalism regarding the origins of the communities and the consequent status availed to their existence in Sri Lanka.

To assess whether such discourse has been a part of the problem or a part of the solution to the protracted, historically constructed conflict historiographically.

To investigate the themes, structures and strategies of the discourse of Sri Lankan Sinhalese on the origins of the communities and of the conflict to arrive at the Ideological and Attitudinal Positions and its consequent contribution to the sustainable peace in the country.

III. HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To understand the present state of the communities and the conflict, it is necessary to be familiar with the past. There are three assumptions or hypothetical statements regarding the origin of the Sri Lankan communities, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The Sinhala historians have recorded the first assumption as historical: the Sinhalese came and populated the island originally from northern India [53] before the Tamils did from the Southern India. The Chronicles of this island written in Pali such as the Dipavamsa (4th century AD), the Mahavamsa (5th Century A.D) and the Culavamsa, historiographically speaking, written with the Sinhala Buddhist consciousness and subjectivity, have reinforced this first assumption as the real historical information. Intentionally or un-intentionally these Chronicles avoided or suppressed the history of the Tamils and Tamil rulers in Sri Lanka.

However, still the controversy on the Northern India origin prevails because, as the second assumption states, it was said that both communities originated from the southern part in the fifth century BC [34]. A noted Sri Lankan Sinhala historian, [21] says:

"It is important to note that the Aryan theory was not merely something imposed from above by Orientalist scholars. It was eagerly welcomed by most Sinhala scholars who found the Aryan theory flattering in that it elevated them to the ranks of the kinsmen of their rulers" [34].

Historiographically, the periodization of the history of Sri Lanka has been manipulated according to [43]:

"It was generally supposed by writers on Ceylon that the natives had no record of events or genuine history, their statements being only legendary tales and romances. This was the opinion of the Portuguese and Dutch. G.C. Mendis was himself so biased by his foreign training and outlook that he saw the 2500 year history of Sri Lanka as an extension of the histories of foreign countries. In his "The Early History of Ceylon, or, the Indian Period of Ceylon History" Mendis divided the island's history into, not periods of Sri Lanka History, but the North Indian Period (earliest times to 1017 AD), South Indian period (1017 AD to 1505 AD), Portuguese period, Dutch Period and British period" [43].

The Tamils, predominantly Hindus, originated from the southern part of India. Tamil is a Dravidian language commonly spoken in South India. Even at the very beginning of the conflict, the Dravidian-Aryan Divide construction was sown in the minds of the communities [53]. Many pro-Sinhala historians tend to believe that the Tamils were invaders from South India and the Sinhalese the original settlers from the North India [33].

[39] gives a different description about the origin of the Sri Lankan communities based on the origin of Sri Lanka itself with the geological evidence which has not been able to be discarded by the geologists.

"Would Malinda admit the fact or the truth that Lanka was a part of the Sub-continent of India. He cannot deny this, as this is an established fact by geologists. The Continental mass called by the geological name

"Demuria" was connected to India. In Tamil, it was called "Commorikkandam" that is why the southern tip of India is called even today as Cape Commorin. It is stated that the 5th Sea storm that occurred in 9000 B.C. due to the shift of the tectonic plates in the Indian Ocean, this land mass disintegrated and drifted in all directions. A small part of that separated from South India, is the present Lanka. It was called "Ilankai" in Tamil. This name was later modified, by deleting the first and the last letters and what remained, made it Lanka. Consequentially, the inhabitants of the island was composed of a mix of South Indian Dravidians, speaking Tamil, Telungu, Kannada and Malayalam languages" [39].

Further, [39], like many other scholars, reveals the non-authenticity of the Vijaya legend of the Mahavamsa which is a myth of Mahanama, the author of the Mahavamsa.

"The historical chronicle, Mahavamsa claims that the Sinhalese were a founded race. That is, not an indigenously and organically evolved race. It is stated that Prince Vijaya arrived around the 6th century B.C. with 700 hundred of his followers and by marrying the Tribal woman named Kuveni, founded the race. This is a myth of Mahanama, the author of the Mahavamsa. If this is so, Sinhalese are the only race in world founded by an identified individual. No races are found by individual persons. Races are organically evolved with the march of time. However, granting this, as an assumption, it would then mean, that there was no Sinhalese race before 600 B.C. Besides, Kuveni couldn't have been a Sinhalese. Name Kuveni, is undoubtedly a Dravidian name. There are names ending with "Veni" even today, as for example Krishnaveni, Hamsaveni etc, amongst the Tamils. Further, Vijaya gave up Kuveni and married a Pandyan princess from South India. So did his followers. So, the descendants of these marriages cannot, by any logic, be Sinhalese but Dravidian Tamil, Telugu, Kannada or Malayalees. Therefore, the origins of the Sinhalese lay elsewhere. The author of the Mahavamsa never ventured into the period beyond that of Vijaya. That would have been uncomfortable for his agenda. So, he painted in one stroke that the pre-Vijaya inhabitants were Yakshas and Nagas" [39].

The Northeast of Sri Lanka became the principal settlement of the Tamils. Earlier, in 1915, E.T. de Silva proclaimed: "This is a Sinhalese country. I say so boldly." [36]. Even the few Sinhalese politicians who believed in 'all island nationalism' failed to challenge this kind of propaganda. They were all self-serving, middle class power seekers [34].

A well-recognized historian, [19], in his recent book on Tamils in Sri Lanka – A Comprehensive History Circa 300 BC to Circa 2000 AD published by MV Publications in Sydney has established what [39] tries to prove. [19] states this geographical as well as geological facts supported by [09].

"The dispersal of Mankind is an important phase that is relevant to the regions of India and Sri Lanka. In the geographical context of India this global movement of mankind from Africa is understood to have taken place first in South India. Accordingly, long before mankind began occupying northern India, human kind began life

in southern India and Sri Lanka. During this period, Sri Lanka was part of the land mass of the Indian subcontinent. It became an island about 7000 years ago when it physically separated from southern India." [19, p.27] based on [09].

[19] further quotes [24] to reinforce the existence of human beings in this area more than 28, 500 years ago.

"On the basis of this fact it emerges that during the pre-historic period, the populations of South India and Sri Lanka were of the same ethnic stock. It is evident, however, that with the passage of time, various other ethnic groups merged with them until recent times.In addition to the scholarly consensus that Early Man inhabited South India and Sri Lanka for thousands of years, there exists concrete research evidence that they lived in this area more than 28, 500 years ago." [19, p.27] based on [24]

Further, [19] confirms that the scientific studies on the ancient history of Sri Lanka and Tamils published by the renowned Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankan historians and archaeologists like Professors: K. Indrapala, S. Pathmanathan, P. Ragupathy, Sutharsan Seneviratna, S. Deraniyagala and L. Gunawardene have recorded the above mentioned Pre-historic information about the origins. They contend that Sri Lanka has been multi-ethnic and multi-cultural from prehistoric times. They add that both the Sinhalese and the Tamils are from the same South Indian-Sri Lankan (SISL) gene pool. They reject the mass migration or invasion theory so popular among colonial and post-colonial historians. They say that people, with their physical and social heritage and assets made multiple movements in multiple directions time to time [02]. Their findings were supported by the available archeological and anthropological evidence, ancient historical records, literary sources, etc.

"Although Sri Lanka (Ceylon) was historically comprised of two distinctive nations, the country's history has been written or represented as if it were one nation. However, two nations, namely Sinhalese and Tamil, have existed in Sri Lanka continuously from historic times, each with its own distinctive religious, cultural, social, economic and political values. Both ethnic groups ruled in Sri Lanka from the historic period and even prior to the medieval period they each established their separate kingdoms based on their traditional homelands. However, there is still contention among the Sinhalese people who argue that Tamils do not have a legitimate right to their claims for self-determination.....This study does not intend to go back to the historical legends. Scholars in the fields of history, archeology, sociology, and linguistics have convincingly proven that the Tamils of Sri Lanka have the same rights as the majority Sinhalese community to inhabit and share power as a fully-fledged society in every respect. Dr. K. Indrapala, formerly Professor of History at the University of Jaffna, in his recent book, Tamils in Sri Lanka: Evolution of an Ethnic Identity --- C.300BCE to C.1200CE, Sydney, 2005 has revealed this historical truth without prejudice. This well-researched and scholarly work is highly recommended to anyone who wishes to understand and gain a clear knowledge of the true historical situation." [19, p.1]

[34] states that the existence of the Tamil Kingdoms along with the Sinhalese kingdoms during the pre-colonial era and the unavailability of any systematic historical record of the communities.

"Before the colonial era, there were local independent kingdoms in Kotte, Kandy both nominally Buddhist and largely Sinhalese) and Jaffna (Hindu and Tamil in its orientation). Due to the differences in religion and language and tensions over land rights, there were often wars between the Sinhala kingdoms and the Tamil Kingdom until the coming of the Portuguese. Except the mythical and legendary accounts, there was not any systematic historical record of the communities" [34].

Some of the Sinhalese historians and politicians used to suppress the fact of the origin of the Sri Lankan Tamils in this land and they always recorded and advocated confusing the Sri Lankan Tamil origin with the invasions and rule of the Tamil Kings from Tamil Nadu.

"There is a reference to the historical invasion by the south-Indian Tamil king Ellalan, or Ellare. It was reported as an epochal conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese by the near mythical Mahavamsa. It led to a brief period of South India rule in the northern Lanka, but he was defeated in battle by the Sinhala king, Dutugamanu. Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Kalinga kingdoms of India also had commercial and cultural interactions with Lanka from time to time. There were also invasions, interpreted as an age old enmity between two ethnic groups by later historians. Many Sinhalese groups emerged from South Indian immigrants and assumed Sinhala Buddhist identity" [34].

However, according to [43] citing from [11], says "K.M. de Silva, a Sinhala historian, who recorded 'the Aryan settlement' in Sri Lanka, published a History of Sri Lanka, the text of which runs to 560 pages. The 20 centuries to the end of the 15th century are dismissed in 92 pages."

Some historiographical information on the 'historical records or chronicles' of the Sinhalese rationally cause the real historians skeptical about the origins of the Sinhala race and the arrival and settlement of the Aryans in Sri Lanka.

"The "Mahawanso," however, contains numerous and absurd fables; the truth being overlaid with the usual amount of fiction inseparable from all oriental histories: it is also a subject open to doubt if Mahanamo, who compiled the chronicle up to his time, faithfully transcribed the previous documents, recording events some of which may have been eight hundred years older than himself.

Turnour, in the introduction to his "Mahawanso," points out the extraordinary resemblance between the account of the landing of Wijayo in Ceylon and that of Ulysses in the island of Circe, adding that it would be difficult to defend Mahanamo from the imputation of plagiarism, had he lived in a country in which the works of Homer could by any possibility have been accessible to him; the whole story is almost identical" [43].

Further there was nothing rational to explain the fabulous origin of the Sinhala dynasty: the mating between the lion and the maiden.

“The Mahavamsa (written in the 6th Century AD) tells the story of Sinha-bahu, a North India who, along with a twin sister Sinhasivali, was born of the union between a lion and a maiden. He was not a Buddhist but a Vaisnava, and with his sister as queen, he fathered 32 sons, the eldest of whom was Vijaya. The Mahavamsa explains that “Vijaya was of evil conduct and his followers were even (like himself), and many intolerable deeds of violence were done by them.” Vijaya and 700 of his men were banished and sent away to sea, landing in Sri Lanka at the time, the chronicle claims, of the Buddha’s death. This is the mythological source of the Sinhalese people, those who came from a lion (sinha) and who established Sinhala “the country of the lion.” [43].

The Sinhala historians and Sinhalese could not digest the fact of the legitimate right of the Tamil origin in this Land from the pre-historic times and the consequent invasions and the rule of the Tamil Kings from Tamil Nadu due to the protracted ideological as well as racial enmity so a convenient history was constructed to pacify the Sinhala community and suppress the ‘indigestible facts’ regarding the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

“The Mahavamsa says the island was a Sinhalese kingdom during the entire period referred to. It was ruled for most of the period on the “one sovereignty” (literally “one umbrella”) principle. There was not one local Tamil ruler. Anuradhapura, the seat of government (5th century BC to 11th century AD) was seized just four times in the 16 centuries by invaders from South India who temporarily held north-central and northern parts (the Province of Rajarata) and driven out. The longest occupation was that of the Cholas from 993 to 1070 AD. Buddhist chroniclers regularly invented scenarios in order to explain the presence of so many South Indians in their midst. The rajavaliya (Lineage of Kings) gives an account of a Sinhalese invasion of the Chola kingdom in South India in the 12th Century. The Buddhist chroniclers were responding to the national shame of one South Indian invasion (10th Century) and another from Kalinga (13th Century)” [43].

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper chooses a methodology of qualitative analysis of the exemplified discourse extracts of some prominent contemporary Sinhalese and analyzes them for tracing their existing ideological attitudinal positions on the topic of the research..

V. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In Sri Lanka, it is generally perceived that the two major ethnic communities, the Sinhala and Tamil, practice cultural and linguistic nationalism; the Sinhala community, mainly, the Sinhala elites and Sinhala-owned media represent majoritarianism and ethno-nationalism or ethno-centrism [01], [03]-[05], [10], [13]-[16], [22], [26], [28], [29], [32], [34], [38], [45], [48], [51] etc. Even after all these incidents of ethnic violence, international interventions, and peace talks, in this era of globalization and technological and information revolutions, these ideological positions have not receded.

In the document on ‘Invasions, violence, atrocities and plunder characterize the Dravidian involvement in Sri Lanka from 230 BCE’ by Dr. Daya Hewapathirane (January 17, Toronto, Sri Lanka Guardian), the historicized ethno-nationalism is explicit:

“Our country experienced terror in its worst forms never known in our land before, during the invasions and rule of the Dravidian Kalinga Magha and later in recent years under the Tamil terrorist Prabhakaran. The crime-prone rule of Kalinga Magha prevailed for 21 years from the year 1201. The Tamil Pandyan and Tamil Nayakka intrusion into Sinhala royal families led to our traditional royalty going into disarray after the 13th century, and the eventual decline of the stability and magnanimity of the Sinhala Buddhist nation.” [23].

It is interesting to note that Hewapathirane simply connects the invasions of the Dravidian Kings to the struggle of the contemporary Sri Lankan Tamils to show that the contemporary ethnic conflict is the continuation of the historical invasions over the centuries. He feels ‘ashamed’ of the inevitable ethnic mix up during the Tamil intrusion into Sinhala royal families resulting in the ‘pollution of the pure Sinhala royal blood’ and ‘the eventual decline of the stability and magnanimity of the Sinhala Buddhist nation.’ It reveals the strategy of self-glorification in self-criticism. The possessive proposition is revealed in ‘our country’, ‘our land’, and ‘our traditional royalty.’ It seems that even now he continues to feel ‘this shame.’ Hewapathirane continues to assert, topicalize and foreground that the Tamils are invaders and the characteristic of “violence has become a part of the mental and psychological structure of the average Tamil” while suppressing, excluding that the incidents and events of the violent behaviours of the Sinhalese Kings in the history.

“There are very few incidents of Sinhalese history worth recording. Nothing can be more dreary and uninteresting than the domestic annals of the island, as related in the native chronicles, presenting a monotonous succession of plots and crimes; more than twenty six kings having met an untimely end, children murdering parents, wives husbands, husbands wives and children, to clear their way to the blood-stained throne,—fourteen sovereigns were murdered or poisoned between the years A.d. 523 and 648, a period of little more than one hundred years, giving only an average reign of eight years to each. Pandukabhaya, who reigned 437 B.C., put to death nine of his maternal uncles.” Not more than two-thirds of the whole Sinhalese kings retained their regal authority to their decease, or reached a funeral pile without a violent death.” [44].

[23] seems to reveal racial hatred towards the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The discourse of dichotomy is maintained using ‘Us versus Them’ and positive and negative lexicalization. He makes a warning to the Sinhala community in the form of deliberative rhetoric or in emotional appeals or pathos.

“Some Tamils came to our country as mercenaries. Propensity to violence and criminal activities is not a recent development among Tamils. The history of Tamil involvement in our country is marked by excessive violence. This characterizes the history of Tamil invasions and involvements in our country from early

times. This makes one think whether violence has become a part of the mental and psychological structure of the average Tamil” [23].

Hewapathirane making many existential presuppositions, ignorantly reiterates that the Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese so the Tamils should go back to Tamilnadu, their homeland. The Sinhala historicism is something to be proud about because it has been that the Tamil and Sinhala social and cultural phenomena are determined by the historical discourse of dichotomy creating Thesis and Antithesis: the violence, invasion and crime of the Tamils versus the non-violent, invaded, victimized Sinhalese. He is trying to state that these tendencies are due to the historical developments as the most basic aspect of human existence. Thus he shows his propositional attitude towards the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

“Whether the outrageous and violent attitudes of Tamils in general, towards Sri Lanka have changed in recent times is questionable when one learns of the outrageous public pronouncements of Tamil leaders of Tamil Nadu - the Homeland of Tamils. It was as recent as May 2009 that Jayalalitha called for Indian troops to invade Sri Lanka to help create a Tamil state. This dim-witted woman is a former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, the current Leader of Opposition and Leader of one of the largest Tamil political parties in India”[23].

After having an assumed evaluation that the Tamils are violent, he makes the epideictic or ceremonial rhetoric and an asserted evaluation that “the outrageous and violent attitudes of Tamils in general, towards Sri Lanka have not changed in recent times”.

In an Interview with Dilanthe Withanage, Chief Executive Officer and one of the founding members of the Bodu Bala Sena and the Chair President of its political arm, by Zachary Walko on June 15, 2016 for *The Diplomat*, the premier international current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific region, he reveals his ethnonationalism instead of constitutional nationalism.

“I completely understand Tamils need a homeland. Any nation when they don’t have a mother country, they have problems. They have issues. So, fighting for Tamil homeland is a reasonable fight. In Sri Lanka, they are only 4 million Tamils. But outside Sri Lanka, they have 80+ million Tamils. So it’s obvious that Sri Lanka is not the best place to have the Tamil homeland.So what I’m trying to say actually, that Sinhalese Buddhists are a minority in global sense. Global minority.

I believe that more power is with the Christian groups and the minority groups. More power. Now, for example, the opposition leader is Tamil. I don’t have any problem even with a Tamil being president of this country. There is no issue. But, as opposition leader, because of the [incoherent] problems of the Constitution, it doesn’t provide true democracy. And if you look at what debates in the parliament, what actually passed in the parliament. All in favor of minority groups, not in favor of Sinhalese Buddhists” [52].

Regarding the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, he makes an apparent admission and an apparent altruism move here. Then he makes an apparent contrast and an apparent denial. In addition, he makes an apparent compassion move that “So

what I’m trying to say actually, that Sinhalese Buddhists are a minority in global sense. Global minority.”

Further, he makes an apparent honesty move. Though he is obsessed with a Tamil being the Opposition Leader, he magnanimously says that he does not have any problem even with a Tamil being the president of this country.

In an interview with the Venerable Athuraliye Rathana Thero by Mian Ridge in Jaffna 17 Jun 2007 for the Telegraph Media, UK, asked for his views on the need for further peace talks, he said:

"We need conversation - and we need war." The Tamil desire for a homeland is based on a myth. "Sri Lanka was totally a Sinhalese kingdom, and most people accept that." [35].

First, he makes an apparent admission and an apparent contrast on the topic of conflict resolution. His views on the origin of the Sri Lankan Tamils and the resolution represent both his existential presupposition and propositional attitude and the views of the most of the Sri Lanka's hardline monks possessing anti-peaceful resolution based historicism and ethno-centrism. While asserting that “The Tamil desire for a homeland is based on a myth”, he suppresses the fact that there are many so called historical events like the birth of the Sinhala race as a result of the mating between the lion and the maiden, which are mythical. He uses the strategy of quantitative enumeration to prove the existence of a ‘historical truth’ in "Sri Lanka was totally a Sinhalese kingdom, and most people accept that."

When Emeritus Professor of History, S. Pathmanathan, also the Chancellor of Jaffna University, in an interview with *Dailymirror* 30 March 2017, discussed the origins and argued for the Tamil Homeland concept from a historian's point of view, he said both the Sinhalese and the Tamils have a common identity and origin. To this position, Mr. Nimal Wijetunga posted his counter comments on the news website below the text of this interview:

“Mr. Pathmanathan has forgotten the very clear historical fact of Tamils have come to Sri Lanka as Invaders, smugglers, plunderers, captured during invasions, more recently as Kalthonies, as Slaves to work in Tea Estates. Every inch of Sri Lanka belonging to Sri Lankans and not to any other and no area is homeland to anybody. The homeland is Sri Lanka. Dogs can bark and mountains will never ever come down. Let Pathmanathan barks and more he barks, he tries to take action against reconciliation. At last, I would say that Pathmanathan can day dream of all these non-existing so called problems to Tamils and we are confident that nobody can take Tamil masses back in the destructive path as they have the brains to understand that Elam agenda or Federal or land and police powers are annihilated with the annihilation of LTTE in 2009” [50].

Wijetunga's ethno-nationalist position clearly popularly resembles and represents the position of the majority community, the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. He uses the strategies of deliberative rhetoric, denial, falsification, and emotional appeals or pathos in doing so. In short, he concludes that Sri Lanka is the country of the Sinhalese. Others are outsiders and invaders. The annihilation of the armed struggle of the Tamil Movement, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, is the

annihilation of any resolution for the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. His existential presupposition and epideictic or ceremonial rhetoric give no space for a healthy rational and systematic exploration and explanation of the history.

In another interview with Sri Lanka's Minister of Human Resources, Development, Education & Cultural Affairs, Mr. Karunasena Kodithuwakku, on "Peace Process of Sri Lanka" by [27], on January 14, 2003, he said,

"In terms of population, out of now almost 20 million, about 12% are Sri Lankan Tamils. But of course we have another Tamil group called Plantation Tamil, those who have come to Sri Lanka 2-3 centuries ago. They are Indian in origin. All Sri Lankans are of Indian origin. Sinhalese are the descendents of Prince Vijaya who came to Sri Lanka about 2500 years ago. The Tamils also are decedents from India, but of course, most recently they came here and are Plantation Tamils. They total about 6% of the population. So altogether roughly 18% in this country are Tamils. In addition to that, we have another 7% Muslims." [27]

The minister, officially representing the government of Sri Lanka and its entire people of diversity, believes that Sinhalese are the descendents of Prince Vijaya who came to Sri Lanka about 2500 years ago. Then it can be assumed that he still believes all the events and incidents associated with the King Vijaya, especially, the mating of the lion with the maiden, and the consequent origin of the Sinhala race etc. Further, he accepts the origins of the Tamils with the words of dilution and distraction such as 'also', 'but of course' and 'most recently' to avoid equating it with that of the Sinhalese. Thereafter, he immediately adjoins the arrival of the Plantation Tamils. He simply joins the arrival or existence of the Sri Lankan Tamils over 2000 years in this land with that of the Plantation Tamils over 200 years, to mean that both have the same status more or less but the arrival of the Sinhalese is something unique, important and original. The discourse markers of the expressions reveal the strategy of Apparent Admission and Apparent Altruism moves. The quantitative enumeration strategy is used to dispel the qualitative historical nature of a conflict and a solution.

In an interview with the Sri Lankan Ambassador for USA, Bernard Goonetilleke on May 5, 2008 with WCCATV13 in Worcester, Massachusetts, he said,

"One has to go into history to ask the question whether there were two separate states. Initially, in 1949, the Tamil politicians asked for a federal arrangement. That was not acceptable to the rest of the country, and there was unhappiness resulting from certain developments that took place in the 1950s and 1960s, and by 1975, the Tamil United liberation Front (TULF) decided to ask for a separate state. And, as justification for this particular demand, they went back to an ancient document written in 1779 by the first British Colonial Secretary, when it was said that a certain part of the country, starting from the western part and going toward the north and all the way down east, belonged to a separate Tamil kingdom called "Tamil Eelam." And this particular statement or minute was an erroneous statement, which had no historical basis at all. There used to be a Tamil kingdom from the 13th century onward, for some time, but if you go into

historical records, you will find that particular kingdom had been a sub-kingdom of the main kingdom of the country. But, of course, there have been times when the center became weak, and the sub-kingdom became stronger, and had more power than a normal sub-kingdom. But this Tamil sub-kingdom came to an end in 1621. So, if you try to use something that existed in the 13th century and came to an end in 1621, as a basis of a demand for a separate state today, that is not going to happen, because there are other developments that have taken place since then" [20].

The Ambassador, because of his ethno-nationalist and historicized standpoint, using the strategy of denial and falsification, out rightly dismisses the historical record written in 1779 by the first British Colonial Secretary in Sri Lanka without producing any reliable counter historical record. He simply states it as 'erroneous without any historical basis' hiding the fact that most of the historical records found in the Chronicles of the Sinhalese had also no historical basis at all. Then, using the apparent admission strategy, he tries to dilute the existence and brings it to have existed just 300 years between the 13th and 16th centuries. He uses backgrounding or de-topicalization or de-emphasis strategy replacing that 'the Sinhalese did not accept' with 'That was not acceptable to the rest of the country', and instead of 'the Tamils suffered and lost their lives, limbs and properties in addition to their social, political, economic and cultural rights due to the government actions and the riots ignited by the Sinhalese mobs of racism', he uses the passive expression, 'there was unhappiness resulting from certain developments that took place in the 1950s and 1960s, and by 1975.'

In an interview with the leading Constitutional Lawyer Manohara de Silva on 04th April 2017, who has authored a new book titled "The strategy of separatists and Constitutional Amendments" that deals with the 13, 16, 17 and 19 Amendments, he speaks about the constitutional proposals and their implications on the country and the majority religion:

"Sri Lanka is a small country. We have a very rich culture. The 2500 -year civilization will be destroyed instantly if you allow other cultures to overwhelm it.

People of this country have always been for the protection of Buddha Sasana and giving it the principal place. That cannot be done by promoting other religions over it, instead. That is not even permitted in India. The other important thing is the limitation of cultural and religious practices to citizens in that country.

They try to preach to us, with the sinister aim of suppressing Buddhism. Religion and culture are protected in the US, Europe and the Arab world. Then, why are they trying to destroy our culture? They do it purely to destroy Buddhism.

(The reforms says that)Buddhism is given foremost place but Buddhists and followers of other religions are equal. The preservation of our culture and civilization should be done. Otherwise, it is not to discriminate any other religious group. It is also to prevent other cultures coming in and overwhelming the prevailing majority culture" [12].

Manohara de Silva using a discourse strategy of binary position, the good versus the evil' and the victims versus the

invaders' and the Us versus Them', creates the thesis and anti-thesis discourse here: the Sinhala Buddhist culture versus the rest of the Cultures including Tamil. He is disappointed about the Constitutional Amendments going on right now because, he feels 'suspicious' about the reforms because it says that 'Buddhists and followers of other religions are also equal'. His historicism predicts in his propositional attitude that the amendments allowing other cultures will destroy his 'very rich culture and the 2500 -year civilization 'instantly.' He thinks Sri Lanka has one and only culture, the Sinhala Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka. Tamil culture is also an alien culture to Sri Lanka in addition to other cultures such as Christian and Arabic. It is his assumed evaluation. His supportive dramatic use of the discourse, such as 'small country,' 'destroyed instantly'; 'overwhelm it' is to evoke fear and victimization. It is his asserted evaluation. There is also an Apparent Compassion move in his statement. He means that 'the people of this country have always been for the protection of Buddha Sasana and giving it the principal place.' So he obviously alienates Tamils from the 'people of this country.' Further, he reinforces that 'that cannot be done by promoting other religions over it, instead.' Finally he brings in an analogy in India. Whether India practices the same is questionable. Further, even if it does, other countries need not adopt the bad role model of India. Further, on the contrary, India practices many democratic practices such as de-centralized state governance, police and land powers to the states of India, minority community members becoming the prime ministers and presidents of India, media freedom, freedom of speech etc. If Manohara de Silva is ready to accept these practices too from India, then the ethnic problems would have been solved decades back.

In September, 2008, the Sri Lankan Security Forces and the Government of Sri Lanka were still making statements of this ideological internalization. The statement of the Army Commander Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, in an interview with Stewart Bell of the *National Post* newspaper of Canada, published on September 23, 2008 (at a time when the Army was marching into the LTTE-controlled areas to "liberate the Tamils trapped in the clutches of LTTE terrorism") says:

"I strongly believe that this country belongs to the Sinhalese but there are minority communities and we treat them like our people," he says.

"We being the majority of the country, 75%, we will never give in and we have the right to protect this country.

"We are also a strong nation ... They can live in this country with us. But they must not try to, under the pretext of being a minority, demand undue things."

"That is our duty." [06]

The binary positions of 'US' versus 'Them' and majority versus minority reconfirm the existence of the Sinhalese nationalist historicism based on the scientifically disproved historical information. The Hela Urumaya has also stepped into this ethnocentrism. Fonseka's claim of Sinhala hegemony over Sri Lanka is, according to the Party's General Secretary, Omalpe Sobitha Thera, commented as follows:

"Nothing but a fact proven by intellectuals and researchers... Sri Lanka is the country of Sinhala people who built its history and civilization. People of all other ethnic groups have citizenship rights here, but Sinhala

people have the unique national right in this country." [17].

Here "national right" is placed superior to "citizenship right". The strongly inculcated and indoctrinated position, 'Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese' is reinforced and reiterated throughout the 2000 years of history. He failed to divulge the names of those "intellectuals and researchers". The then Minister of Environment and Jathika Hela Urumaya frontliner, Champika Ranawaka said:

"The Tamils have no homeland in Sri Lanka, it's only in India; The Sinhalese are the only organic race of Sri Lanka. Other communities are all visitors to the country, whose arrival was never challenged out of the compassion of Buddhists. But they must not take this compassion for granted. The Muslims are here because our kings let them trade here and the Tamils because they were allowed to take refuge when the Moguls were invading them in India. What is happening today is pure ingratitude on the part of these visitors" [40].

Commenting on the Commander's statement, [37], a senior journalist working for the *Sunday Times* and *Sri Lanka Guardian*, reconfirms the prevalence of ethnonationalism:

"It is precisely statements like this and the lack of an official response to them, which betray the ideological core of this regime and confirm the argument that this war against terrorism is primarily a war to consolidate the majoritarian political and constitutional status quo. It is also the lack of a greater response from the public and civil society at large, especially the religious and community leaders as well as professional organisations that confirms the argument that dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy has been stifled and ethnic polarisation institutionalised as part and parcel of the popular political culture" [37].

The then Late Sri Lanka Prime Minister, Ratnasiri Wickramanayake had been insisting on "Sri Lankan as a Buddhist State". In one of his speeches in Cyprus on September 28, 2008, he said: "Sri Lanka is a Buddhist state. Here terrorism cannot win. Buddhism will protect our country; we will find an end to LTTE terrorism within the time of our government" [42]. However, he refuted the existence of a religious conflict that is hidden within a linguistic and cultural conflict and criticized the international news agencies attempting to project its existence:

"I should here refer to certain misconceptions. The international news agencies covering developments in Sri Lanka since those unfortunate events invariably used certain clichés with every report and the practice continues even today. A common cliché is to say that the Tamils who were mainly Hindus living in the North and East of Sri Lanka have suffered deprivation and discrimination under successive governments dominated by Sinhala Buddhists in the South. This is very misleading as it can be misconstrued that it is a religious conflict" [41].

The then Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Bogollagama in an interview with an Indian magazine, *Frontline* Sep 27th - Oct. 10th, 2008, denied the very existence of an ethnic problem in Sri Lanka:

"No longer would the international community recognize there is an ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. We have a terrorist problem, a fascist movement, in the LTTE..." [18].

Buddhist monk, Ven. Ellawala Medhananda Nayake Thera, Member of Parliament representing the political party, Jathika Hela Urumaiya, gave this statement in the parliament on October, 07 2008:

"The reference to Sri Lanka as Sinhalese or the Sinhala Country had historical connotations. The minorities need not have fear about the name of the country as even the word Thamila had been used in our literary texts for invaders and not necessarily for Tamils. Even the Portuguese invaders had been referred to as Thamila though they of course could not have been Tamils. Shouldn't the Sinhala country be called the Sinhala country? If not, should it be called India or Australia? This country belongs to the Sinhalese. When we go abroad, we should tell them that we are from the land of Sinhalese. It doesn't belong to the Tamils." [46]

This ideological position is still prevalent among the Sinhala readers. When the political parties of Tamilnadu observed a fast, called by the Communist Party of India to protest against the Sri Lankan military thrust into the northern areas in Sri Lanka, this news was reported in *Daily Mirror* on October 03, 2008. In its website, a Sinhala reader posted this comment:

"Sri Lankan government is not attacking Tamils, only attacking terrorists. Therefore, these so called activists should know what the difference between these two is. Anyway Sri Lanka is one country & this belongs to us Sinhalese. If Tamils want, they can live equally with us like other communities live or else, should go to Tamilnadu where they originally belong to" [47].

As mentioned above in all the exemplified extracts, if these members of the Sinhala community playing significant social, political, and religious roles can reveal nationalism and historicism based on ethnocentrism 'strongly and visibly' in their statements. The newspapers are also stamped as "ethnonationalistic." [25], [07]. [31] reports that "eighty seven per cent (87%) of Sri Lankan journalists believe that the Sri Lankan media is failing to provide accurate, balanced and fair information; eighty per cent (80%) of Sri Lankan journalists believe that the media is biased toward one ethnic group or another" (31, p.1).

The existence of these positions is affirmed among the media according to the Media Monitor of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), the most reliable and neutral source [08]. The Board of Directors consists of eminent Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and International Community members. [30] published a report, after monitoring all the language newspapers in 1997. In it, the Sri Lankan press had been accused of "war mongering, racism and ignorance about the country's ethnic conflict":

"It is as if all journalistic norms have been discarded in the frenzy to criminalise Tamils. Along with the police, military and other state apparatus, the press had also contributed its share to the ever-increasing polarisation of the majority Sinhala and minority Tamil communities (described as "races" in Sri Lanka). By and large, in most

of the stories, sources are not identified, locations are not specified and the information is vague and incomplete" [30].

The watchdog said that reporters displayed their readiness to believe the worst of any Tamil. They, in a "selective and even perverse use of ethnic identity", described all the suspected and arrested persons as "Tamil". According to [30], the media portray the 'selfless and ever-vigilant' Sinhalese-dominated security forces and lurking Tigers behind every building.' It shows the criminalization of Tamils continuously and the reinforcement of the war ideology. '

The gulf between the two communities and the "hatred and insensitivity" being whipped up among the Sinhalese community was "further evident in the way the same news reports are treated in Sinhalese or Sinhala-owned newspapers and Tamil or Tamil-owned newspapers". This has prompted Media Monitor to "the sad but stubborn" conclusion that the Tamil language newspapers in Sri Lanka are "irrevocably alienated" from the Sinhala and English language press" [30].

VI. CONCLUSION

This analysis concludes with the reinforcement that in the post-war reconciliation context in 2017 and onwards, the Sri Lankans need to develop constructive discourse on political harmony, cohesion and co-habitation in their civil, political as well as media discourse to make a positive impact on legislative changes being taken place towards the post-conflict reconciliation, sustainable peace and justice in Sri Lanka at present. The ideological historicized, ethno-nationalized discourse of the Sinhala extremists and nationalists try to constitute power for a majority community and deprive the legitimate power for the minority communities and construct ideational, textual and interpersonal constructs based on their historical origins for legitimizing their power in Sri Lanka as well as in the international society. This paper qualitatively analyzed the exemplified discourse extracts of some of the prominent contemporary Sinhalese, which represent majoritarianism and ethno-nationalism regarding the origins of the Sinhala and Tamil communities and the consequent status availed to their existence and the resolution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The conclusions derived from the historiographical evidence draws that this discourse supports to the problematization of an important historical event which is related to the protracted, historically constructed Sri Lankan conflict. It finds out that these unilateral ideological positions continue even now. With an impartial, systematic examination of the history, the contemporary Sinhala and Tamil scholars and the public should approach the ethnic conflict constructively to suit the present needs and grievances of all Sri Lankans. The Sri Lankans should be educated about the true history without any bias on the origins, evolution and co-existence and conflict of the two communities. Attaining an acceptable political solution for all the Sri Lankans seriously demands this approach.

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