Hindu Responses to Inter-Religious Peace Initiatives in Contemporary Sri Lanka

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

A recent crisis of civil war had affected Sri Lanka for a near twenty-six year period, beginning with the fulminant 'Black July' of 1983, whilst arriving at an acrimonious and controversial cessation in May 2009. The burgeoning vehemence attracted the attention of various actors, both international and domestic, with an interest in deescalating the discord between compatriot ethnic groups. Among such impetuses were the various inter-religious peace initiatives, organizations which attempted to restore unity by fostering the shared accordant values of otherwise disparate religious traditions. Of what academic work presently exists on the topic of inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka though, curiously very little accounts for the participation of those within the contextual Hindu community. This is a particularly problematic knowledge vacuum, given that Sri Lankan Hindus, by virtue of a significant overlap with Tamil ethnicity, were intimately affiliated with a major faction within the nation's period of civil unrest. This thesis then succeeds in shedding light upon how Sri Lankan Hindus have so far responded to the offer of participation within the activities of inter-religious peace initiatives; however it does so through considering a series of hypothetical impediments – ranging from the pressure of nationalist militancy to ethical perspectives on the legitimacy of violence – which appeared to have had the potential to negate any prospective positive engagement. The validity of such hypotheses is then tested according to a multifaceted collection of ethnographic field data. Though the Civil War is now very much at an end, this thesis also argues for the continuity of an underlying conflict into the current post-war era, and as such offers an invaluable reference point to those involved in ongoing strategies of inter-religious peace-building in Sri Lanka.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction and Literature Review

1.1.   Overview of Study

The application of inter-religious engagement for the sake of conflict resolution is a phenomenon which may be observed in a multitude of contemporary contexts. Examples of this now span continents, with many variants of conflict having been addressed in this fashion. For instance it is visible in Nigeria in light of turbulent Muslim-Christian dynamics (Watts 2008 & Aihiokhai 2013), and is also encouraged in a post-9/11 United States where communal tensions have emerged and escalated (van Doorn-Harder 2007). Additionally it may be discovered where contested statehoods and land rights have incensed the on-going Arab-Israeli conflict (Kronish 2008, Wilkes 2007 & Abu-Nimer 2004), or where the tripartite ethnic factions of Bosnia-Herzegovina are attempting to settle into amicable plurality following their part in the devastating Yugoslav Wars (Goodwin 2003 & Kollontai 2008). From the latter two examples, it is evident that inter-religious engagement is being utilized as a means of counteracting conflicts which themselves are not fundamentally or exclusively religious in tone. The category of 'ethnic conflict' is one such delineation of modern dissonance, which by its own definition can in theory at least be quintessentially non-religious[1], yet has nonetheless aroused the attention of inter-religious movements attempting to broker agreeable resolution. The aforementioned case of Bosnia-Herzegovina is one such context in recent times where ethnic conflict

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[1] Although, as Fox remarks and this thesis will demonstrate, divorcing religion from ethnic conflict is seemingly a rare encounter (Fox 2004: 62).

has become confronted by inter-religious peace organizations – a similarity it seems to share with the nation of Sri Lanka.

What is presented in this thesis is an exploration of Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka both on a theoretical level, but also in practice by way of their engagement with four select nationally-focused inter-religious peace organizations. Such has been conducted in a way which had adopted the initial supposition that there would be various prospective problematic factors surrounding Sri Lankan Hindus becoming involved in inter-religious peacebuilding[2] generally, but also specifically depending on the organization in question. This research identified four of these hypothetical challenges which appeared to have the potential to provoke 'negative'[3] responses from Sri Lankan Hindus when confronted with the opportunity to cooperate with inter-religious peace initiatives. Whilst Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis will comprehensively explain the development of each hypothetical impediment, for the sake of elementary clarity all four will now be briefly outlined:

- **Hypothesized Impediment 1: The Proximity of the LTTE and Tamil Separatist Ideology**

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[2] This thesis understands this term as those enterprises that involve religious actors working in conscious unison towards mutually agreeable conditions for conflict resolution or prevention. Powers explain that these initiatives possess five recourses within which they may attempt this, including 'deepening relationships', 'improving understanding', 'finding common ground on beliefs and issues', 'promoting common action', and 'encouraging complimentary action' (Powers 2010: 339). The third of these – which is expounded in greater detail and critiqued in Chapter 4 of this thesis – is typically key to inter-religious peacebuilding efforts, as this is used to highlight an alleged disposition inherent within all religious traditions, which affirms the 'sacredness of human life, the obligation to seek the common good for all and the rejection of religious violence' (Powers 2010: 340). Such may be considered key due to it appearing to form the impetus for activities which correspond to the four other aspects outlined above; for example, the recognition of this supposedly shared beneficence would be instrumental in developing stable, empathetic relationships between communities that diverge upon religion lines, whilst it would also serve as the rationale for uniting them together for common and/or complementary action in the face of conflict.

[3] In this sense defined as a rejection of, or even hostility towards, the notion of becoming involved in the work of inter-religious peace initiatives either generally or in relation to specific organizations.

The significant overlap between Tamil ethnicity and Hindu religiosity in Sri Lanka entails that the ideal of Tamil separatism is an ethnocentric political ambition which by default directly seeks to address the situation of Sri Lanka's Hindu community. As such the militant advocates of Tamil separatism, of which the LTTE emerged paramount, features a membership body comprised predominantly of Sri Lankan Hindus. With inter-religious peace initiatives seeking only unity among Sri Lankan ethnic communities, could the alternative route of secession advocated by Tamil separatists prove a more persuasive alternative? Yet even if this was not to be the case for some Hindus, could not the combative nature of groups such as the LTTE threateningly discourage any participation with organizations in pursuit of divergent political ends?

- **Hypothesized Impediment 2: Hindu Ethics of Violence and War**

In the face of conflict, instigators of inter-religious engagement will appeal to the supposed peaceable ethical core of all religious traditions as a remedy for present violence. In terms of Hinduism however, despite a legacy which includes several prolific nonviolent figureheads such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (MacNair 2015: 44-46), the doctrinal and narrative basis of this belief system appeared to be quite effortlessly interpreted to in fact sanctify the conduct of warfare when certain circumstantial criteria were observed. In this sense then, could the Sri Lankan Hindus be further inclined to decline involvement with inter-religious initiatives,

given that it seems one might be able to render violent retaliation against the Sri Lankan State as prescribed or even mandated according to the traditional model of Hindu ethics?

- **Hypothesized Impediment 3: Inter-Religious Contentions**

This thesis will establish the nature of the conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka as being fundamentally that of 'ethnic conflict', although from the period of July 1983 until May 2009 this developed a temporary adjacent strand of 'ethnonationalist conflict'. Thus although inter-religious engagement is being employed to remedy contentions which are not at their heart religious, that is not to suggest that coalescing the various compatriot religious communities of Sri Lanka for this purpose would not itself be without difficulty. With the Christian community being accused of formulating 'unethical' proselytization strategies which allegedly target Buddhists and Hindus, perhaps Hindus would avoid inter-religious peace initiatives for fear that they would provide a front for this activity in a similar manner to some Buddhists. Furthermore, with a pronounced trend of fractious fundamentalism among the nation's Buddhist community, could Hindus be even more reproachful when presented with the opportunity to invest themselves in inter-religious engagement?

- **Hypothesized Impediment 4: The Religious and Political Affiliations of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations**

When considering the four inter-religious peace organizations accounted for within the remit of this research, each possesses fundamental connections to either specific political entities or religious communities which may be salient in terms of potentially discouraging Hindu involvement. For instance with one organization being an appendage of the Sri Lankan State, might this likely be perceived by Hindus as problematic, given their near exclusive Tamil ethnic composition? In addition, with another of these organizations featuring a distinct Christian undertone, could such inter-religious contentions as referenced above be further obstructive to procuring Hindu involvement if they suspect a similar subversive agenda at executive level?

This initial hypothesizing comprising Chapters 4 and 5 is then measured against a composite acquisition of field data beginning in Chapter 6, which collates semi-structured interviews with twenty-eight members of the Sri Lankan Hindu community, five unstructured interviews with non-Hindu Sri Lankans, as well as various personal observations documented within an ethnographic journal. The resultant product is a body of research which aims to make an original contribution to existing scholarship, for at present the knowledge concerning the Hindu relationship to inter-religious peacebuilding in contemporary Sri Lanka exists as little more than brief sporadic references in a series of related publications, of which Sri Lankan Hindus are not in any sense the primary affair. Yet in addition to any potential impact within the academic world, this thesis will be of external value as a reference point to those involved in orchestrating contextual inter-religious peacebuilding. This opening chapter, having now defined in brief the essential parameters of this research, will continue to firstly provide some background information pertaining to the nature and

status of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka, for although this will be addressed at length within Chapter 3, it remains necessary to provide some initial basic insight at this point for the purpose of explaining the relevance of this research. With this constituting the basis of a rationale, such will then be expanded upon during the course of a literature review, which will primarily further articulate the pertinence of this thesis by identifying its unique position within the field, whilst additionally defining the sources upon which its theoretical infrastructure is founded.

Before proceeding any further however, a brief clarification on certain core terminology applied within this thesis must be noted. The classical thought in the discipline of peace studies, owing to the work of Galtung (1976: 297-298), posits the tripartite distinction between the actions of 'peace-making', 'peace-keeping' and 'peace-building' undertaken in the pursuit of conflict resolution. As Gawerc explains, the first of these refers to the process of high-level negotiations towards terms of settlement between conflicting parties, whilst the second encompasses intervention on behalf of third-party agents in order to prevent or reduce violence, and finally the third which involves identifying and subsequently rectifying the underlying cause(s) of belligerence (Gawerc 2006: 439). Throughout this research, the term 'peace-building' will be employed in order to describe the agenda and conduct of inter-religious peace initiatives, although it will be used in a manner different to the previous definition. Instead, such will concur with Appleby's interpretation, whereby he defines peace-building as 'prevention and early warning, mediation and conciliation, and other elements of conflict transformation' (Appleby 2000: 282). Seemingly then Appleby's understanding of the term amalgamates aspects of both the classical renderings of peace-keeping and peace-building, and this was deemed

markedly advantageous within the context of this research as a term was needed to address in totality the undertakings of inter-religious peace initiatives which, as Chapter 5 will demonstrate, comprises those activities corresponding to each of these categories.

1.2. Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka

The conflict of contemporary Sri Lanka is one that is rightly overshadowed by the Sri Lankan Civil War, as this ultimately represents the escalation of ethnic tensions to the degree of open warfare. To summarize the Sri Lankan Civil War as laconically as possible would be to describe it as a confrontation between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan Government, due to the former having made an armed attempt at carving an ethnic nation-state from the geographical territory of the latter who then reacted with resistance to this (Bose 2002: 633). However the LTTE's struggle for secession was by no means a spontaneous affair, for commentators have observed that the opt for militancy on their part rests upon a post-colonial legacy of non-violent activism from within the Tamil ethnic minority to preserve their rights which were perceived as being progressively threatened by the politically dominant Sinhala majority (Wilson 2000: 24). Moreover despite the Sri Lankan Civil War coming to a close some five years ago, one should not therefore regard conflict in Sri Lanka as having reached total diffusion. The Sri Lankan Civil War was considered to have reached termination from May 19th 2009, following Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse's public declaration in Jordan that Sri Lanka's governmental forces had cornered the remnants of the LTTE – including most

notable figures comprising their high command - in a north eastern pocket of the island, and with no realistic hope of escape, they had effectively conceded victory to the Sri Lankan State (Harris 2012: 73).

Whilst a debate of technicalities may leave some wishing to object against designating May 19th 2009 as the rightful date on which came the end to conflict[4], the point nevertheless remains that at the time of conducting this research the Sri Lankan Civil War has definitively reached cessation – or at least it has militarily speaking. Despite the graphic storytelling medium appearing a somewhat unconventional contributor to political theory, consider for a moment the critically acclaimed '*V for Vendetta*' by prolific writer Alan Moore. Towards the very end of this narrative a curious notion arises pertaining to an almost impervious quality of political ideology. 'There's no flesh or blood within this cloak to kill. There's only an idea. Ideas are bullet-proof' retorts V, the iconic revolutionary chief protagonist, in the face of his fascist assassin whilst upon the cusp of death (Moore 2008: 236). Instantaneously, one would be reminded of the still lingering existence of Nazism's subversive ideals long after the violent collapse of the Third Reich according to various 'Neo-Nazi' movements (Lange 2012: 186). It is this idea of a political ideal surviving beyond the destruction of its present advocates which provoked contemplation of its implications in relation to the LTTE's 'defeat' in the Sri Lankan Civil War. The victory of Sri Lanka's Governmental forces over the LTTE is

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[4] For whilst the remnant LTTE pockets of resistance were effectively compromised by the SLA opposition on the 16th May 2009, what remained of the LTTE did not however issue an official surrender until the following day which in turn was not accepted by governmental forces until the following day on the 18th May. So whereas one could in principle argue that the Sri Lankan Civil War did not actually reach termination until 18th May 2009, the severity of SLA's assault on the LTTE the preceding day lends weight to popular determination of the ceasefire as having begun instead on the 16th May 2009 – the point at which the LTTE were crippled to the extent of inevitable submission. Even so, with President Rajapakse not actually delivering a formal statement of victory until his arrival back in Sri Lanka on 19th May 2009, the Sri Lankan Civil War is not typically considered to have reached a definitive conclusion until this particular day.

supposedly affirmed on the condition that the command of the LTTE were quite literally obliterated after being hopelessly encircled by Government troops on May 16th. Such prominent members of the LTTE as most notably Velupillai Prabhakaran, though also including the likes of Balasingham Nadesan and Colonel Ramesh, were all executed as a result of the SLA's decisive military advance into the LTTE heartland.

It would seem that the Sri Lankan Government as of 2008 opted for a martial approach to dealing with the LTTE insurrection, forsaking an earlier ceasefire agreement of 2002 upon acknowledging copious alleged and disputed violations of the treaty on the part of the LTTE (Wickramasinghe 2015: 359). Ultimately, it was this final SLA offensive which gave way to an official LTTE statement acrimoniously admitting defeat. However the LTTE's military surrender which signalled the end of the violence is arguably far from being tantamount to genuine conflict resolution, for the supposed 'end' in this case may not necessarily amount to the conclusion of hostilities between advocates of Tamil separatism and the opposing stance of the Sri Lankan state authorities. I will be discussing this observation to a much greater extent within the main corpus of this thesis, though for now it should suffice to become aware of numerous instances wherein a resurrection of the LTTE's armed resistance was attempted by disillusioned members of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority[5]. Moreover with the controversial accusations of state-sanctioned war crimes committed upon Tamil civilians on the part of the SLA during its conclusive offensive against the LTTE, there remains a profound sense of uneasiness in post-warfare Sri Lanka (Stone 2014: 153). Accordingly many Tamils emerged in aftermath of the Civil

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[5] Evident from world media coverage, including an example dated in 2012 (Lanka Business Online 2012) and more recent allegations from 2014 (The Times of India 2014).

War's strife with a keen distrust, or in some cases a sustained loathing of those to whom they are supposed to owe their allegiance as citizens of Sri Lanka (Weiss 2012: 255).

The situation of post-Civil War Sri Lanka appears a textbook example of what Johan Galtung, the seminal Norwegian academic in the discipline of Peace Studies, refers to as a 'Negative Peace', whereby there is an 'absence of war' but not necessarily a cessation of conflict (Galtung 1964: 2). Galtung's enhanced definition of violence entailed that an earnest peace will remain elusive until 'structural violence' may be overcome, and thus rendering a 'Positive Peace'. Structural violence is explained by Galtung as a product of societal systems which prioritizes the privilege of one demographic group over others, and thus effectively limiting the wellbeing and aspirations of certain sub-sections of a population (Galtung 1980: 107). Examples of structural violence then may include sexism, classism, and indeed racism or ethnocentrism, and the danger of such is its potential to transform or restore Negative Peace to explicit violence or open warfare (Beyer 2008: 58). A Positive Peace then is of course where physical violence such as war is absent, although importantly in addition to this, a society must effectively be fulfilling the needs of all constituent members by way of equitable treatment and open multilateral relationships (Galtung 2003: 32). Post-war Sri Lanka is evidently a distance away from achieving a sincere peace, for although open warfare rescinded with the defeat of the LTTE, clearly from what was previously discussed the political agitations which initially incited this violence have not been addressed, whilst the ostensibly negligent *jus in bello* practices of the SLA reinforces a perceived structural violence in contemporary Sri Lanka which functions at the expense of its resident Tamils.

The ramifications of this in terms of the salience of this research is that with the vast majority of Sri Lankan Tamils being Hindu, in order for a Positive Peace to be realized, it would be crucial for inter-religious peace initiatives to be both committed and effective in incorporating members of this particular religious community into their activities. Accordingly, research such as this would be an invaluable resource to those involved in facilitating inter-religious peace-building, for any of the aforementioned hypothesized impediments proving to be exact could explain the reasons behind any previous limitations in procuring cooperation from Sri Lankan Hindus, with a view to developing strategies to negotiate these obstacles. This of course would allow inter-religious peace initiatives to maximize their potential for contributing to the resolution of the conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka which continues to strain compatriot ethnic relationships and thus increase the prospect of further violence. This then would constitute a fundamental rationale for this thesis, as such would attribute to it substantial 'research impact', specifically according to the 'instrumental' variety in that it would be capable of 'influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour' (ESRC 2015). Nevertheless, this research would obviously be irrelevant if existing publications already covered its contents, and so it is now necessary to progress on to reviewing the related academic literature to evidence the innovative originality of this thesis within the current knowledge base as further justification of its significance, and thereby additionally highlighting its capacity for 'academic impact'.

1.3.   An Analysis of Existing Literature

The key areas of academic literature of interest to this research in terms of where it attempts to posit a novel and critical contribution may be summarized firstly as those which detail the character and activities of inter-religious peace initiatives in a specifically Sri Lankan context, and secondly those which impart a Hindu perspective on the ethics of conflict with a focus on the manner of its resolution. Yet in providing each of the above, the aggregate impact of this entails that this thesis' ultimate input corresponds to those sources which postulate the theoretical utility of the inter-religious engagement as a medium for conflict resolution. I will now proceed with constructing a detailed overview of the two aforementioned spheres of literature with a view to articulating how this thesis relates to present publications in terms of how it advances the knowledge therein. Subsequently, I will then conclude by unpacking how contributing to these categories of literature in such a way also cumulatively enhances a further cluster of publications concerning the theoretical mechanics of inter-religious peace-building.

1.3.1. Inter-religious Peace Organizations in Sri Lanka

The notion then of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka as having been resolved with the cessation of the Civil War already appears questionable. The third chapter of this thesis will begin exploring this in greater depth, so as to conclusively evidence that conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka is a remaining issue that did not culminate in synchronicity with the Sri Lankan Civil War – for what else can explain the continued operations of contextual inter-religious peace organizations? As Chapter 5 of this

thesis explains, inter-religious peacebuilding has been employed as a mechanism for conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka since the latter half of the twentieth-century, as ethnic contentions were escalating towards war. However it was not until the actual onset of the Civil War that inter-religious peace initiatives really began to burgeon, perhaps for obvious reasons. Concerning the academic literature on the subject of inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka there is surprisingly little so far conducted, and what there is available appears somewhat limited in terms of its coverage of the phenomenon. There has been so far published only a single scholarly publication which provides anything towards a comprehensive overview of the practice of inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka, which includes both accounts of institutional parties involved as well as a critique and theoretical appraisal of this method in context (Hoole et al 2013). Hoole et al's work here evidently derives some of its content from an antecedent magazine article – albeit written according to academic standards – composed by one of its co-authors, Jehan Perera.

Perera's article in *Dharma World* (J Perera 2012), a quarterly publication which advocates Buddhist practitioners to embrace inter-religious engagement for the sake of establishing peace, constitutes only a cursory general glance at certain inter-religious peace initiatives. What remains of the pertinent literature appears to fall into either of two categories – specifically being that which examines the character and work of singular inter-religious peace initiatives, whilst other literature comprises the assessment of inter-religious participation as a means of resolving conflict in Sri Lanka from a singular faith perspective. Regarding first the former of the above, this literature base incorporates most notably work of Bond (2013, 2006a, 2006b, 2004a,

1998, 1996), but also that of King (2009 & 2005), Hayashi-Smith (2011), Chowdhry & Tyndale (2006), Macy (1983), Brooks & Khanal (2009), Marshall & Van Saanen (2007), Shealy (2009), Bilodeau (2000), Frydenlund (2005) and Goodhand et al (2009). The first eight of these authors have produced work that centres on the same inter-religious peace organization operating within the contemporary Sri Lankan context, namely the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. Bilodeau's research instead focuses on the IRPF, whilst Goodhand et al concentrate upon the 'Inter-Religious Organization for Peace' which is localized to the Trincomalee area of Eastern Province. Finally, Frydenlund's report for the 'International Peace Research Institute' in Oslo (PRIO) only briefly summarizes certain highlights of IRPF peace-work. In terms of the second sub-grouping of the literature identified above, the proposal and reality of inter-religious engagement for the sake of contextual conflict resolution is here predominantly approached and encouraged from a Christian trajectory (de Chickera 1996, Wickremesinghe 1979 & Emmanuel 2013), although there are Buddhist equivalents of a lesser number which are composed from either an impartial observer (Swearer 2010 & Harris 2007[6]) or advocating practitioner (Ariyaratne 1999a) perspectives whilst corresponding to the philosophy and activism of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. Note here the absence of any such pieces written from either Muslim or Hindu perspectives.

Yet the nature of this thesis is such that it does not correlate precisely with either of these categorizations, for the intention was in fact to produce research which would instead pioneer another category altogether. However this is not to suggest that by

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[6] Although strictly-speaking Harris is not in this piece encouraging Buddhist participation in specifically inter-religious attempts at contextual conflict, she does nevertheless establish a compelling case which advocates general engagement in peace-building according to Buddhist principles whilst using the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement to illustrate this potential (Harris 2007: 155).

doing so this thesis has become distanced from all of the publications referenced above. Rather this research builds directly upon these previous publications insomuch as it endeavours to assess inter-religious peace initiatives and the viability of this approach to conflict resolution, albeit from a unique specific angle previously unexplored. I have selected to examine inter-religious peacebuilding as it has occurred within contemporary Sri Lanka in terms of the contextual Hindu community's relationship to it. As will be better detailed in the subsequent methodology chapter, inter-religious peacebuilding is measured within the purview of this research in practice as four principal inter-religious peace organizations which have been coordinating conflict resolution on a national scale. The reason behind this is due to the Hindu community being distributed widely throughout Sri Lanka, and so to aim to provide a holistically inclusive account of the Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives this research also had to mirror this population distribution. Accordingly where an overlap occurs between this research and that of previous publications referenced above is that such includes the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the IRPF, as they both fulfil peacebuilding roles which transcend localities in Sri Lanka. The Inter-Religious Organization for Peace however will not feature in this research beyond this point, for like Jaffna's 'North East Inter-Faith Forum for Reconciliation (NEIFR)' (Wijesinghe 2013), it practices conflict resolution within too limited a locale.

Perera's 2012 article in *Dharma World*, whilst also acknowledging the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, additionally introduces both the 'Congress of Religions' and the Sri Lankan branch of the international 'Religions for Peace' organization as inter-religious peace initiatives which have been nationally orchestrating conflict

resolution. Accordingly, alongside the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the IRPF, this thesis will also be incorporating the COR and Religions for Peace's 'Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka (IRC-SL)' as the remaining two cases of inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka to which Hindu relationship is gauged. Other than Hoole et al's brief examination in *Gods and Arms: On Religion and Armed Conflict*, there do not appear to be any academic publications which detail the Congress of Religions or the IRC-SL, which seems particularly curious given that Hoole et al describe the COR as 'perhaps the most prominent of all exclusively interfaith efforts to date' (Hoole et al 2013: 104). With the IRC-SL being in a sense a franchise of the UN affiliated Religions for Peace there is nonetheless a small corpus of related literature, such as that authored by Vendley (2005) and Klaes (2003). Nevertheless where these publications are limited in relation to the parameters of this present research is that the former primarily engage Religions for Peace on both strategic and constitutional levels, whilst commenting minimally on only two specific manifestations of Religions for Peace[7] of which neither is Sri Lanka. Klaes on the other hand lends focus more to an oversight of the organization's historical development, whilst also elucidating a further series of regional case studies[8] examined to a far greater depth which yet again though does not include Religions for Peace's activity in Sri Lanka.

The question now arises though in terms of why I should have chosen to study in particular the Sri Lankan Hindu community's relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives. Essentially the rationale for pursuing such research is primarily to contribute findings which are both insightful and relevant to the discussion and evaluation of peace-building methods presently in place within Sri Lanka. Though

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[7] Namely, in the contexts of Liberia and Iraq.
[8] Encompassing the former Yugoslav States, Africa, the Middle East and greater Europe.

some may mistakenly draw the conclusion from the foundational conflict dynamic of the Civil War that conflict in Sri Lanka is bilateral – existing solely between the Tamil and Sinhala ethnic populations – it is in fact multilateral, as Chapter 3 of this thesis will explain. The Sri Lankan Tamil community are undoubtedly a key presence within such conflict dynamics, given that it was their specific grievances with members of the Sinhala majority which led to an armed secessionist campaign. Thus it is highly important that any attempts at resolving the recent conflict in Sri Lanka must be intimately inclusive of the local Tamil demographic. With regards to inter-religious peace initiatives then, it is therefore consequently of grave import that Sri Lankan Hindus are closely engaged in proceedings, due to the majority of Tamils claiming adherence to Hinduism (Jacobsen 2008: 118). Yet it would seem though that there have been a number of hypothetical challenges – ranging from the presence of the LTTE to the accusations of subversive Christian evangelism – which could potentially have been problematic in terms of procuring Hindu involvement with inter-religious peace initiatives. A full articulation of these prospective impediments is discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

The essential purpose of this research then is to determine to what extent any of the apparent challenges related to involving Sri Lankan Hindus in the activities of inter-religious peace initiatives, and it is within the following chapter that the precise logistics of such will be elucidated. Briefly though, the methodological process of this project involves the testing of these hypothetical notions via an ethnographic empirical exploration of the target demographic and their surrounding context. The macro-structure of this thesis is thus predicated upon this template, with Chapters 3 to 5 collectively formulating the argument as to why it may have proven problematic

to engage Sri Lankan Hindus within the work of inter-religious peace initiatives. Subsequently Chapters 6 through to 8 provide a systematic display and analysis of original field data in light of the three preceding chapters. Following this, Chapter 9 draws out the critical points of the data analysis pertinent to prior conjecture in order to further develop discussion before ultimately concluding the entire thesis within Chapter 10. What can be gleaned from existing literature is somewhat sparse, although it is sufficient enough that one may conclude that Sri Lankan Hindus have at least to an extent been cooperating with inter-religious peace initiatives (Macy 1983: 29-30; Bond 2004a: 100; Brooks & Khanal 2009: 12). Though the work of Bond (2006), King (2009 & 2005), Hayashi-Smith (2011) and Chowdhry & Tyndale (2006) do mention respectively either 'Tamils' or 'non-Buddhists' as being active within the Sarvodaya Movement, this does not necessarily constitute evidence for Hindu involvement as Hindus are not the only non-Buddhist group in Sri Lanka, whilst there are Tamils who are either Christian or Muslim.

Thus from such sources one can argue that some Sri Lankan Hindus have become involved in inter-religious engagement for the pursuit of peace, although this information is presented in such a way that it is little more than fleeting mentions pertaining to a lone inter-religious peace initiative – specifically, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement – and as such does not by any means constitute a probing evaluation of the Sri Lankan Hindu community's wider relationship to inter-religious peacebuilding. For example, it remains unclear from these publications whether such Hindus were anomalous within their communities by working with inter-religious peace organizations, nor are their reasons for this decision even alluded to. Accordingly it is unknown whether it was the Hindu religious identity of these

individuals which encouraged their engagement with inter-religious peace initiatives, and if so, what aspect of this specifically? Perhaps there were others who subscribed to interpretation of Hinduism which diverted them away from inter-religious peace organizations. Were there organizations other than the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement which attracted the cooperation of Sri Lankan Hindus? Bond mentions that certain Hindus were wary of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement's association with Buddhism and the Sinhala ethnic group (Bond 2004a: 100), and so one begins to wonder how any ethnic or religious affiliations of the IRPF, the COR and the IRC-SL could have impacted upon their prospects of integrating the Sri Lankan Hindu community into their work. These are all questions which are undoubtedly necessary if one wishes to reach a mature understanding of the Sri Lankan Hindu community's relationship to inter-religious peacebuilding, which evidently heretofore remain unaddressed.

A final publication of significant import to this thesis is Hayward's *The Spoiler and the Reconciler: Buddhism and the Peace Process in Sri Lanka*, where she identifies contemporary inter-religious peace-building as having occurred at both national and local levels. In terms of the Hindu presence within such, to use Lederach's classifications of religious actors involved in peacebuilding (Lederach 1997: 39), Hayward explicitly ascertains Hindu 'elites'[9] engaging with the former (Hayward 2011: 191), whilst possibly also suggesting 'grassroots'[10] Hindu participation within local inter-religious peace initiatives, though once again somewhat ambiguously as participating clergy other than Buddhist *sangha* are acknowledged though without

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[9] Being those leaders from at the precipice of hierarchy or esteem within religious communities, thus meaning that they are endowed with oversight capabilities according to a national scale.

[10] Equating to the average clergy figure with little authority beyond local jurisdiction, and as such are orientated only towards potential success in locally-based initiatives.

individual reference (Hayward 2011: 192). In either scenario here, Hayward's interest is in the role of religious leadership in conflict resolution regardless of their scope of influence, and she justifies this by observing how clergy representing the Sri Lankan Buddhist community as well as those from the nation's 'other traditions' possess a 'particular leverage' that makes them potentially highly effective in terms of instigating conflict transformation. This of course is not a uniquely Sri Lankan social feature, for the notion that the authoritative standing of religious leaders can be advantageous in disseminating ideals and strategies for peace-building is in fact a fundamental facet of the general theoretical utility of inter-religious engagement for the sake of conflict resolution (Fitzduff 2004: 12). According then to the theoretical basis of inter-religious peace building, Hayward's focus here on the integration of religious leadership within such proceedings in Sri Lanka is undoubtedly useful in terms of considering their impact.

However it must be noted that Merdjanova & Brodeur posit that in light of the recent Balkans conflict, it is of paramount general importance that the laity is also as deeply invested in such efforts, for without this broader encompassing beyond parochial positions of power, the attainment of sustainable peace will prove problematic due to the possibility of isolating the needs of local communities (Merdjanova & Brodeur 2009: 1964). Given the apparent logical strength of this provision, as well as its verification in the context of the Balkans, I opted in this thesis to depart from Hayward's approach by instead examining solely the responses of Hindu laity to inter-religious peace initiatives. Furthermore Gawerc comments that in any conflict situation 'grassroots support is critical for the persistence of armed conflict' and so 'popular support [of peace initiatives] is a necessity' (Gawerc 2006: 441), thus

lending further credence to this decision. In accordance with what is advised above by Merdjanova & Brodeur and Gawerc, it would thus be of immense importance that the lay dimension of the Sri Lankan Hindu community is being keenly accommodated into inter-religious peace-building; however from the existing literature just assessed it appears that there presently exists no such clear account of how lay Hindus have been responding to the prospect of inter-religious peace initiatives, and so the depth of their engagement remains uncertain. On account of providing such though, this thesis is rendered both an innovative and essential contribution of knowledge, as in this sense it vitally complements the existing academic literature base on inter-religious peace-building in Sri Lanka, as well as offering insight which may influence the way in which inter-religious peace initiatives operate so as to maximize their engagement with Sri Lankan Hindu community.

1.3.2. Hindu Perspectives on Violence and Conflict Resolution

Such a relative dearth then in present academic literature concerning the Hindu engagement with contextual inter-religious peace initiatives in Sri Lanka grants to this thesis the cornerstone of its originality. The parochial nature of existing literature is such that whilst both contextualized Christian and Buddhist viewpoints are covered here – albeit seemingly to varying degrees – in terms of their evaluation of inter-religious engagement as a medium of conflict resolution, there is ostensibly an absolute vacuum where the Hindu perspective is concerned. Understanding contextualized Hindu perceptions of inter-religious engagement as a catalyst for resolving conflict is a critical factor in understanding the Sri Lankan Hindu

community's relationship to conflict resolution through inter-religious cooperation. As it presently stands though, without any thoroughgoing indicator of how Sri Lankan Hindus have responded to the notion of inter-religious engagement applied as a means of conflict resolution, there is meagre comprehension of this relationship. Of course it is possible to discern from sources previously stated that at least some Sri Lankan Hindus have become involved with inter-religious peace organizations, although it is not possible from these sources to determine how their adherence to Hinduism has shaped this decision. The question then of to what extent Hindu principles had the capacity to shepherd its adherents in Sri Lanka towards either inter-religious peacebuilding or militant activity is not directly considered in present literature.

The above question hangs upon the apparent dichotomy within the Sri Lankan Hindu community in terms of some of its number becoming involved in inter-religious peace initiatives according to those works previously cited, whilst Roy observes that the LTTE was almost unanimously comprised of those identifying themselves as Hindu (Roy 2004: 43). There is seemingly then the possibility that Hinduism has been able to inform and justify two polarized courses of action; namely, both that of inter-religious conflict resolution, and that of violent insurrection. Though certain informed individuals seem content in their preference of terming the LTTE as a 'secular' organization (such as Gunaratna 2003: 216 and Schonthal 2011: 553), there are protests to the contrary from others such as Roberts which argue religion as being firmly intertwined within the infrastructure of the separatist movement through its official appropriation of religious symbols and ritual (Roberts 2004: 494). I would concur with the likes of Gunaratna and Schontal to the extent that the LTTE appears

secular insomuch as it features an absence of religiously motivated agenda or faith centred objectives in the mission of Tamil Eelam (Gregg 2014: 83), rather than it exhibiting a distant ambivalence from religion. However the poignancy of Roberts' research is that religion appears very much a meaningful component in the lives of the rank-and-file among the LTTE, thus suggesting that Hinduism could perhaps have played a role in validating their presence there.

Accordingly this thesis will examine the Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in terms of the values that this particular religious tradition endows its adherents with. Such will supplement existing literature, as Hinduism will become another of the religious traditions present in Sri Lanka that has like Christianity and Buddhism, become subject to an assessment of how these faiths have equipped their adherents in terms of relating to contextual inter-religious peace-building. Hinduism's legacy is such that appears to contain such juxtaposed images as the combat-inducing dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra (Rinehart 2004: 29), with that of Mohandas K Gandhi's '*satyagrahis*'[11] who non-violently resisted colonial oppression in India (Akella 2009: 518). There seems then a certain ambiguity due to an apparent general dichotomy within Hindu thought with regards to the nature of legitimized conflict resolution. Historically there is evidence of Hindus employing both violent and non-violent measures in attempts to neutralize socio-political conflicts, citing religious principles as the basis for either (Keethaponcalan 2014). Thus where contemporary Sri Lanka is concerned, it is important to discern how the Hindu community has been interpreting its religious tradition's dictates on the ethics of violence, as this would have significant impact on

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[11] Though not all *satyagrahis* accompanying Gandhi were Hindu, most of their number were (Valiani 2011: 97), thus suggesting that the core non-violent principle of the movement was resonant with Hindu values.

its relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives. As was aforementioned though, the challenge attached to this relates to the fact that at present there are no publications which air contemporary voices from within the Sri Lankan Hindu community addressing the morality of violence.

In order to compensate for this absence, an attempt must be made at identifying a general Hindu ethical framework in order to begin hypothesizing to what extent the religious principles of Sri Lankan Hindus might induce participation with inter-religious peace efforts or even compel them to engage in armed secession. Yet initially this would seem inherently problematic in that Hinduism is depicted as a pliant religious tradition which contains marked divergences in adherent belief to the extent that many consider it extremely taxing to produce an encompassing definition of what it means to be Hindu (Sherma 2014: 112). Nevertheless, certain scholars have attempted either to present an overview of Hinduism's diversity as it pertains to varying perspectives on the ethics of war and peace, being an approach which I will term henceforth as '*representative*', or alternatively construct a singular viewpoint which purportedly represents an authentic Hindu verdict on this matter which I will from this point refer to as '*monocentric*'. Included among the former are Shastri & Shastri (2000), Keethaponcalan (2014), Young (2004) and Thompson (1988), although the directions of these pieces do not necessarily conform to identical arcs, for though all succeed in identifying the essential polarity of Hindu thought on the matter of ethical violence – which is examined in greater depth within Chapter 4 – Keethaponcalan and Shastri & Shastri diverge from Thompson and Young by virtue of them ultimately arguing to endorse a single end of this polarity; namely, that which advocates the practice of '*ahimsa'* or 'nonviolence'. Thompson and Young on the

other hand seem only interested in documenting this diversity in perspective to arrive at the conclusion which stresses Hinduism's multifaceted nature.

In terms of those *monocentric* sources which offer only a single framework to account for a Hindu understanding of conflict, there is again an apparent two-fold partition. The work of Adhikary (2012) and Gandhi (2004) form one such sub-category within this grouping, whilst Menski (1996) and von Brück (2004) comprise the other. Such a distinction is warranted on the grounds that the former attempt to articulate entirely innovative models of Hindu ethics that stipulate exclusively in favour of nonviolent action, whereas the latter two authors present only one of the polarities featured in the *representative* works, although the diametric alternative to the nonviolent current exalted by Keethaponcalan and Shastri & Shastri. Accordingly, Menski and von Brück offer a vision of Hindu ethics which rejects any mandate for universal adherence to nonviolence, but instead accept the viability of violent responses to conflict should certain conditions be met, as are outlined in Chapter 4. The strength of propounding such as an authoritative Hindu ethical perspective is that, as Chapter 4 once again will elaborate fully, this particular model has enjoyed such longstanding and expansive authority within Hinduism that it is frequently remarked as constituting the 'orthodox' standpoint; hence why this position also rightly appears within all *representative* works. Thus though in light of Sherma's observations there remains an apparent weakness within the work of Menski and von Brück insomuch as they present a singular response on behalf of a multifaceted religious tradition, one can at least appreciate the sense and relevance concentrating upon a framework which represents a historical majority consensus. Furthermore, this orthodox model also arguably possesses greater bearing within

discussions of Hindu ethics than do the innovative models proposed by Adhikary and Gandhi by virtue of this influence.

Where then this thesis fits alongside both the genres of literature previously referenced is that though it affirms the validity of contemporary Hinduism as being a complex and multidimensional entity in a similar vain to the *representative* literature, it appropriates the orthodox ethical framework from the *monocentric* literature in order to devise a hypothesis for Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives based upon a projected anticipation of their ethical sensibilities conforming to this model. Of course given the aforenoted variance within Hinduism, it would be imprudent to consider with certainty at this point that Sri Lankan Hindus would necessarily approach ethical issues along the lines of this particular framework. This notwithstanding however, the seeming orthodoxy of this model warranted its utility within a hypothetical estimation above all other alternatives proposed within the current literature. Such would be particularly true pertaining to the alternative frameworks proposed by Adhikary and Gandhi with these both being innovative and disconnected from a Sri Lankan context, and hence would unlikely represent the normative sensibilities of Sri Lankan Hindus. In this sense then, this thesis explores the contextual Hindu ethics pertaining to war and peace in relation to an orthodox framework to assess their prospects of engaging with inter-religious peace initiatives. Irrespective though of whether or not Hindus actually base ethical decisions upon this particular model, such will nonetheless uncover the reality of their perspective either by contrast or confirmation according to orthodoxy.

Not only will this complement existing literature which presents how either Buddhist[12] or Christian[13] belief systems might equip adherents for engagement within contextual inter-religious peace-building by accounting for a Hindu perspective[14], but it will also supplement the category of literature which reviews the Hindu ethics pertaining to war and peace by broadening a contextual dimension previously largely unaccounted for. Though Keethaponcalan does mention in passing some Sri Lankan Hindus as having practiced nonviolent resistance in response to perceived State discrimination against Tamils (Keethaponcalan 2014: 298), it would nevertheless be problematic to consider this as definitively helpful in representing the typical Hindu ethical current in contemporary Sri Lanka. This is due firstly to the fact that this behaviour was observed prior to the chronological period of interest to this thesis as defined in Chapter 2, and so its continuity is uncertain and influence potentially limited due to various militant groups such as the LTTE having emerged after this point whilst being composed of Hindu individuals. Secondly Keethaponcalan's apparent agenda within this work is to ascribe primacy to a nonviolent interpretation of Hinduism, and so it is possible that he may have overlooked other perspectives among Sri Lankan Hindus which do not correlate with his vision of authentic Hinduism. Accordingly this thesis may be considered as an advantageous development of Keethaponcalan's work insomuch as it provides a much more recent depiction of state of Sri Lankan Hindu ethics concerning war and peace, that is additionally unencumbered by any aspiration to have the tradition conform to a specific ideal.

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[12] I.e. the work of Swearer, Harris, and Ariyaratne as previously referenced.

[13] I.e. the work of de Chickera, Wickremesinghe, and Emmanuel as previously referenced.

[14] Which, for obvious reasons, would be of interest to facilitators of inter-religious peace-building in Sri Lanka.

1.3.3. The Utility of Inter-Religious Peace-Building

By contributing to each of the two aforementioned clusters of literature, this thesis ultimately becomes pertinent to a further relatively young aspect of study, namely those works which consider how inter-religious peace-building could be an effective provision for the resolution of conflict. Chapter 4 opens with a layout of the theoretical underpinnings of inter-religious peace-building that is anchored upon the work of esteemed scholars such as Abu-Nimer (2013), Johnston (2005), Funk & Woolner (2011), Hertog (2010), Powers (2010), Smock (2010), Sampson (2007), Broadhead (2007), Vendley (2005), Appleby (2000), Dubois (2008) and Kadayifci-Orellana (2013). Outside of the academic arena, Francis Cardinal Arinze's popular publication *Religions for Peace* (2002) is also of critical interest to this research insomuch as it contains significant points of note regarding both the elementary theory of inter-religious peace building, as well as the Hindu capability for engagement in this. The chief distinction between all of the above academic sources and *Religions for Peace*, is that whereas Arinze seems to be suggesting that nonviolent interpretations of the world's religious traditions are preeminent, scholars on the other hand all conform to the what Funk & Woolner describe as the '*peace with religion*' perspective. What this amounts to is the view which avoids taking a stance on what represents a legitimate interpretation of religion by instead dispassionately acknowledging all shades of interpretation across the spectrum of a religious tradition, including strands which promote either violence or peace (Funk & Woolner 2011: 355). This of course means that though these scholars agree that nonviolent or peace-seeking variants of religion are sincere and feasible readings of

a given tradition, they do not propose such in a tone which attributes any sovereignty over competing interpretations.

It would seem that the impetus behind this trend would be Appleby's pioneering work *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (2000), which as an early publication in the field developed the thesis which fundamentally underlies the *peace with religion* perspective that is the characteristic standpoint of current academic literature. As the title would suggest, this publication arrives, through the analysis of various case studies, at the conclusion that religion should be considered 'ambivalent' in its relationship to violence in peace; that is, religion has the essential capacity for either and so is inherently neither peaceful nor violence (Appleby 2000: 27). Appleby does make sporadic references in this work to Sri Lanka, but only in a manner which examines the Buddhist community to confirm his thesis by firstly explaining how their Buddhism has stoked conflict in this context by way of it having influenced the Sinhala sense of socio-political self-entitlement which has functioned detrimentally to the prospects and security of other ethnic groups (Appleby 2000: 62 & 109), whilst secondly acknowledging some Sri Lankan Buddhists as having been active in international peace efforts (Appleby 2000: 135). Though Appleby ratifies his thesis in relation to Hinduism by juxtaposing the peace-work of 'Mahatma' Gandhi with the violence of certain Hindutva organizations (Appleby 2000: 5 & 108), such clearly represents only the adherents of Hinduism within the geographical context of India. My research on the other hand uniquely appropriates Appleby's thesis in order to consider the context of Sri Lanka in terms of how the beliefs of the Hindu community have inspired either peace or violent responses to discord.

Specifically though this notion of 'ambivalence' will be used to hypothesize a challenge against the efficacy of inter-religious peace initiatives in this context, for with religion harbouring the potential for inducing either violent or peaceful action, it seems that one cannot necessarily expect Sri Lankan Hindus to conform to an agenda of nonviolent conflict resolution. Thus whilst this thesis stands in agreement with Appleby and other scholars previously referenced in that it affirms the *peace with religion* perspective regarding the peacebuilding competency of religion, it offers to explore the application of this within the overlooked context of Hinduism in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, this research also endeavours to contest the depiction of Hinduism located within Arinze's *Religions for Peace* according to the notion of ambivalence which underscores the *peace with religion* perspective. As is discussed within Chapter 4 of this thesis, Arinze appears to portray Hinduism in such a manner that it does not account for any destructive potential. Such would seem in light of existing scholarship, epitomized by Appleby's work, a skewed rendering of religion's relationship to peacebuilding with it possessing somewhat of an idealistic view of this. Accordingly this thesis presents a particular contextual example of a singular religious tradition's response to inter-religious peacebuilding, which as a consequence of postulating the validity of ambivalence and therefore the *peace with religion* perspective, attempts to strengthen the critique of those advocates of inter-religious peace initiatives, such as Arinze, who do not seem to base their theoretical appraisal of inter-religious peacebuilding upon a balanced appreciation of religion's relationship to violence and peace by taking into consideration religion's apparent faculty for also encouraging violent responses to tensions and antagonisms.

1.4. Conclusion

This opening chapter has defined the originality of this thesis by illustrating a present gap in academic literature which does not adequately examine the relationship of Hindus to Sri Lankan inter-religious peace initiatives. In addition, such lacks any account of contextual Hindu perspectives commenting on the validity of this approach to conflict resolution within their situation. The chief consequences of this current absence not only resonates within the academic knowledge sphere, but also amongst those parties and actors involved or vested in contributing to the peace process in contemporary Sri Lanka, primarily via the channel of inter-religious cooperation. With conflict a seemingly lingering presence in Sri Lanka then, so too is the process of its resolution, and so any rigorous evaluation of the various methods being utilized in order to achieve this is undoubtedly valuable to its proponents. For those with an interest in inter-religious mechanism of contextual conflict resolution, this research occupies a crucial position where it details the interface between inter-religious peace efforts and a religious demographic which is by way of ethnic affiliation at the epicentre of the conflict. As was previously suggested, it is because of this that it would be of paramount importance that Sri Lankan Hindus are pervasively accessed by inter-religious peace initiatives. Comprehending the nature and scope of prospective impediments to successfully integrating Sri Lankan Hindus into inter-religious peace initiatives is paramount for such organizations with regards to optimizing strategies for engagement. In other words, such allows for Sri Lanka inter-religious peace initiatives to maximize their future interaction with Hindus,

precisely by allowing them to devise measures which may begin to negotiate any adversative conditions.

The structure of this thesis is such that it comprises nine chapters. In the next chapter, there is an in-depth articulation of the methodological process by which this thesis was conducted, including a critique of its methods and data sample parameters. Chapter 3 looks to redefine the understanding of conflict in Sri Lanka so as to appreciate the greater complexity behind what appears as simple 'ethnic conflict', ultimately with a view to pinpointing the position of Hindus in relation to the dynamics of the conflict. Chapter 4 begins to discuss the theoretical basis of inter-religious engagement as a medium for conflict resolution, thereafter subjecting its working principles to review in light of the values of Hinduism and contemporary inter-religious relations in Sri Lanka. Chapter 5 then examines in detail the four nationally oriented inter-religious peace organizations earlier identified, considering how any underlying political and religious associations may impact upon a relationship with Sri Lankan Hindus. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 thus collectively contribute to forming hypotheses concerning prospective Hindu responses to inter-religious peace efforts in Sri Lanka, which were then empirically tested using those ethnographic field research techniques documented in Chapter 2. An analysis of the data acquired from this field work is presented as Chapters 6, 7 and 8, where results are systematized into themes corresponding to hypotheses drawn from the previous three chapters with a view to discerning their validity. Following this, Chapter 9 concludes the study by drawing together the key findings in summative discussion. Thus at this point it seems prudent to close this present chapter, so as to begin

Chapter 2's comprehensive explication and review of the methodological process that underpinned the collection of data samples constituting the crux of this thesis.

Chapter 2 – Methodological Outline and Evaluation

2.1. Initial Considerations

2.1.1. Defining 'Contemporary': A Clarification of Chronological Scope

Over the course of this chapter, the methodology underpinning this thesis will be articulated in light of critical self-reflection, although beforehand the chronological preview of the chronological research inquiry requires firm definition. Evidently 'contemporary', being a fluid term relating to that which is recent or present, admits a certain degree of liberty to this author to curtail the period of investigation to preferential chronological limitations. Though Sri Lanka 'officially' endured its recent period of civil war for a twenty-six year stretch, beginning in July 1983, it can be argued that related aspects of socio-political conflict in one form or another extend further back than what is normatively designated as the onset of the island's conflict phase[15]. Prior to July 1983, Sri Lankan society was by no means a secure entity, be it either at the grass-root social level or at the heights of national politics. Frequent street-level rioting and widespread inter-ethnic paranoia amongst political leaders are two such prominent examples of how tumultuous was the situation of Sri Lanka long before the LTTE began their break-away mission in 1983 (see Ross & Sevada 2002: 96 and Tambiah 1996: 36). The legacy of European colonialism once again makes itself manifest amidst the violence of modern Sri Lanka, as a review of the island's recent history reveals that the age of colonialization gave birth to formidable factional sensibilities among the island's subjugated non-European populace. Needless to say, what followed from Sri Lanka's arrest of liberty from colonial rule was not as jubilant a moment as it perhaps expected. Rather an escalation of such

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[15] Please see Chapter 4 for elaboration.

civil hostilities ensued - the climax of which, was the Sri Lankan Civil War. Hence the process of conflict resolution could even be rightly be considered necessary from as early as 1948, the year from which henceforth Sri Lanka has since become recognized as a self-determined nation.

Be it as it may that the entry of Sri Lanka into a period of independence after its lengthy stint under colonialism was clearly a happening of the modern period, I nevertheless feel that to begin my investigation into inter-religious peace initiatives from 1948 would be stretching the limitations of a 'contemporary' time-frame. As such I focus the range of my core analysis to extend no further backward than July 1983, from which the Sri Lankan Civil War is conventionally considered to have begun, up until the present day. Why it is that I would adhere to these particular limitations of scope is firstly due to use of the term 'conflict' throughout this thesis being primarily in reference to the Sri Lankan Civil War, and indeed secondarily to the current period that is defined by its aftermath. With July 26th 1983 being considered the official date of the Sri Lankan Civil War's commencement, and with this period of warfare being central to this thesis' understanding of contextual conflict, it seemed appropriate to relegate the parameters of contemporary scope to the onset of this pivotal occurrence. Additionally, with my literature review highlighting an apparent lack of academic inquiry into interfaith peace-building in Sri Lanka prior to 1983, this perhaps suggested that such has not existed for any significant time beyond the onset of the Sri Lankan Civil War. In terms of including the post-warfare period that has succeeded the termination of an active LTTE insurrection against the Sri Lankan state within the span of this research, I do so with the justification that conflict appears to have outlasted this event. This would explain

the continuity of inter-religious movements in Sri Lanka, whose mission for sustainable concord in the island persists in spite of LTTE's submission to the SLA in 2009[16].

2.1.2. Considering Prospective Biases

I've stated previously that my primary motivation for conducting this study is that of largely filling a knowledge void in the academic arena, with a possible secondary effect being the creation of a valuable point of reference to those with an interest in building a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. With regards to how myself operating as the researcher in this case impacts upon the work produced, one has to be mindful here firstly of how the motives behind this research could potentially affect the validity of its process and results (Kirsch 1992: 256-257). My primary motivation of satisfying a present gap in the academic knowledge base is in itself, I would argue, an inherently neutral one that is in theory devoid of any predisposed agenda, with Blaikie terming such an 'altruistic' research venture (Blaikie 2010: 17). Nevertheless where my personal proclivities in terms of individual interests begin to inspire my research, such is the point at which the base neutrality of my primary motivation comes endangered by subjectivity. For example, do I admire Hinduism to the point at which I am prepared to bias results in order to make for better appearances? Or do I instead possess somewhat of a quasi-Orientalist 'anti-interest' in Hinduism, whereby my curiosity towards this particular religious tradition stems from a condescending derision of its constituent beliefs and practices? If the latter, would I then seek to

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[16] Please see Chapter 5 for references and details.

position my results in a way that exaggerated the case to devalue Hinduism? What is now necessary is to briefly explore the parameters of my relationship to Hinduism, so as to assess the degree of threat posed by subjective bias towards the research content.

I would best regard myself in terms of religious affiliation exactly as the American author H P Lovecraft described himself, namely as a 'provisional atheist'[17] in that I hold no belief in the existence of 'higher' transcendent powers or beings present in any religious ontology, though such does not discount me from being open to possibilities that experience and reason may one day confirm. As such, I would not at this point consider any religious tradition I've so far encountered to be ultimately 'true' in any consistent epistemological sense. Accordingly I am thus a 'non-Hindu', yet not at all to the extent of resembling something of an 'anti-Hindu'. True though there are certain aspects of Hinduism which seem contrary to my own ethical sensibilities (such as caste hierarchy and the traditional subordinate status of women for example), I would not protest that Hinduism is a wholly negative entity in relation to self and society. In fact I would confidently posit that there are a multitude of positive elements of Hinduism which I as a non-Hindu without religious faith can appreciate, such as the common virtue of *ahimsa* or the strength of community that Hinduism seems to reinforce amongst its adherents. As such, I can thus claim that whilst my relationship to Hinduism is one of relative detachment, it is also one of balanced appreciation that includes a blend of both criticism and praise. What this would then entail regarding my chosen focus of research, is that my relationship to Hinduism is unlikely to provoke bias in my representation of the religion or its

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[17] As proclaimed within a 1932 letter to fellow author Robert E Howard (Derleth & Turner 1976: 57).

adherents. I am of course in addition to approaching this research as a non-Hindu, also in the position of being a non-Sri Lankan national whilst simultaneously belonging to not one of the ethnic communities that have an ancestral connection to the region.

My distance from the nation of Sri Lanka and its inhabitants both culturally and geographically does while designating me an 'outsider' to the context parameters of this research, also in a sense elevate me beyond the danger that may have arisen from being an 'insider' in this case – i.e. a Sri Lankan national of an ethnic group associated with its demographic composition. Should I have been exposed to the degree of intimacy which would lie between an insider and the research context, surely a risk would then threaten to surface in how any allegiances to social and/or political factions could weigh upon the reliability of findings (Dwyer & Buckle 2009: 58). For example, perhaps as a Sri Lankan Sinhala I may be of the opinion that Hinduism is an 'alien' religion that is associated with a perceived subversive 'foreign' element of my society that had birthed a so-called 'terrorist' insurrection against my countrymen. Could I not then use this research as a tool to disparage Tamils by way of their primary religious allegiance? Alternatively as a Sri Lankan Tamil, I may wish to laud the Hindu tradition due to a cultural or devotional connection through sensationalizing its role with conflict resolution measures so as to induce a pro-Tamil sentiment. In either scenario, the authenticity of the research becomes jeopardized by the shadow of socio-political agenda and loyalty. The position of outsider here then may prove to be to the benefit of this research specifically by granting me the so-called 'stranger value', in how my relative estrangement from context sensitivity better equips me to withstand subjective bias on this front (Burgess 1984: 18).

2.2. Study Design

2.2.1. Elected Methods of Data Acquisition and Participant Sample Frame Parameters

It would seem then that given the parameters of this research question, quite clearly what I have undertaken here is a characteristic example of 'case study' research. Considering the various sub-categorizations of case study research according to Stake (2000), it appears to me that the 'intrinsic case study' is perhaps best suited to the task at hand. I would justify this discretion on the basis of the motives attached to actually embarking on conducting this thesis; being namely that of filling a current void in specific context-bound academic understanding, as well as generating relevant reference material for contextual socio-political proceedings outside of academia. On account of the above, surely then an aberration towards a decidedly intrinsic case study appears almost mandatory as all other case study variants proposed by Stake seem concerned with lifting results from a focused context into a greater pan-contextual narrative (Stake 2000: 437). This research unlike these 'instrumental' and 'collective' case studies, would conversely extract analytic conclusions which will not be fed into a grander narrative theory as such has not informed the driving nature of this research. Nevertheless, there of course remains the possibility that the conclusions drawn from this particular thesis could be posteriorly appropriated into a further study which could absorb these results into considerations of a unitive narrative theory between contexts. In opting for case

study research I have, according to Yin, positioned my thesis so as to benefit from a 'mixed-methods' research methodology (Yin 2009: 114). Yin's argument regarding the superiority of the mix-methods approach over that of single source methods as far as case study research is concerned, revolves fundamentally around corroborating differing data types which if corroborated successfully, can result in a more robust portrait of the case under scrutiny developing (Yin 2009: 116).

Though mixed-methods research is understood by some scholars as characteristically combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Bergman 2008: 1), such can also validly include coalescing multiple disparate qualitative methods for the sake of data corroboration (Silverman 2010: 132). In order to produce a viable representation of corroborating data sets within mixed-methods research, one's research paradigm ought to be designed so as to feature either or any of three distinct interpretive processes whilst concerting one's own research body (Brannen 2004: 314). The tripartite organization of mixed-method research's techniques for interlocking data strands involves 'triangulation', 'facilitation' and 'complementarity', and it is the first two of which that are applied within this research. This thesis contains two distinct yet interrelated aspects of data collection, the first of which is to be a 'desk-based' analysis of pertinent academic and certain non-academic literary sources to develop a firm knowledge base of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka and how religion has operated within this, both in terms of resolution and exacerbation. Such not only fulfils the role of context setting, but also provides the backdrop from which certain hypotheses concerning the nature of the Sri Lankan Hindu community's responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in this context may be wrought. These hypotheses which emerged from the precursory desk-based

synthesis stage were then tested within a subsequent field data collection phase. In terms then of mixed-methods research triptych data alignment techniques, it is clear that the facilitation technique provides the underpinning of the entire thesis, with the 'desk-based' precursory data synthesis stage amounting to hypotheses which inform the design of the ensuing field data collection.

Yet in addition to the application of facilitation between desk-based and field data interaction within this thesis, one may also witness triangulation at work internally within the field data collection phase. More specifically however, the presence of the triangulation technique observable within this thesis actually depicts two of the four possible sub-variants of triangulation (Yin 2009: 116). The core of the triangulation concept in mixed-methods research, is that unlike the facilitation technique, triangulation involves diverse routes of data procurement converging together to form a whole result, rather than using one data collection's yield to induce another method's design (Bryman 2008: 91). Triangulation's mutual corroboration of varied research methods in cultivating a multi-faced data accumulation is what is known as 'methodological triangulation', and this is evident among the data collection techniques involved in the field data collection phase in how it conjoins in-depth structured interviewing of Sri Lankan Hindus with a series of brief unstructured interviews taken from pertinent non-Hindus, various field observations and the review of contextually generated media sources. I had mentioned previously that two discrete forms of triangulation are present within this thesis, and with the first of which being methodological triangulation, that which remains to be identified would be the so-called 'data triangulation'. Data triangulation is involved at a parallel to where methodological triangulation may be observed, for where differing methods of

data collection are introduced, they are each utilized to draw information from distinct sources.

The benefit of triangulation in this sense is that it unites these distinct yet related sources to provide a more holistic understanding of how the Sri Lankan Hindu community perceives and interacts with the concept and reality of interfaith conflict resolution (Hammersley 2008: 27). Yet the rationale for employing the in-depth structured interview method as the principle data collection in this regard appeals to the greater complexity of data available via this technique (Mason 2002: 64), which befits its status as the lynchpin of the thesis. To advance now into discussing appropriate sample sizes, I would refer here to work of Bertaux and also Ritchie et al. While Bertaux suggests that qualitative sampling should at least incorporate fifteen participants to ensure saturation can occur (Bertaux 1981: 35), research by Ritchie et al recommend that sampling size should not exceed fifty participants so as to not risk convolution in analysis (Ritchie et al 2003: 84). Reflecting the aforementioned ratio dynamic between sample groups in this research, I therefore looked to restrict the primary structured interview sample size to the approximate greater limit of fifty participants, and the sample size of in-depth interview participation to number closer to the lower limitation of fifteen. Where the unstructured secondary interviews were concerned, these limitations were of little comparative salience due to the fact such were only intended as a supplementation to the primary body of interview data, and so the issue of ensuring saturation among them is irrelevant as they themselves instead contribute to the saturation of the primary data.

Regarding precise sample frame definitions, accommodated within the primary data collection are results from twenty-eight pre-structured interviews with individuals from the Sri Lankan Hindu community. Interviews took place over a period between July and August 2013, with all participants being male and representing various ages above twenty years with an average of thirty-one years. No attempts to recruit female participants were made due to certain religio-cultural sensitivities, which will be discussed in the forthcoming sub-section of this chapter, having to be observed. Geographic representation within the data is relatively diverse, including participants local to six of Sri Lanka's nine provinces - incorporating Western (39%), Central (25%), North Central (7%), Sabaragamuwa (4%), Northern (4%) and North Western (21%). However it is clear that geographical diversity of participants is far from any equilibrium, with results being predominantly partial to individuals based in Western province. Participants also reflect a variety of employment and economic backgrounds, though admittedly there is a slight bias (61%) towards participants from what would be typified as a 'lower-middle' or 'middle' class background (i.e. 'white collar' labourers and professionals). Such may be expected as a result of using the English language as a communication medium during these interviews, for the class bias in spoken English proficiency which favours those of this particular socio-economic background and beyond will be fully articulated in the following sub-section of this chapter. Of course in terms of job specification, for reasons complying with the rationale for this thesis specified during the previous chapter, only those who work within the 'secular' sphere were permitted to provide interviews. This entailed then that those who perform authoritative religious functions within the Sri Lanka Hindu community, such as *pūjāri* ritual specialists or the teachers upon whom the title '*swamī*' is bestowed, were excluded from participation.

Note that details of geographical locale, age and socio-economic background of primary interview participants do not feature further within the upcoming analysis of data. When initially examining the data, I remained vigilant to observe if these characteristics related to any particular answer trends. For example, I had considered if Hindus from one province seemed to be more fearful of the LTTE than others, or if Hindus from one socio-economic stratum were more or less reluctant to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations than those from another. However once the data was examined in this way, it was evident that these factors seemed irrelevant in influencing answers of a particular kind, although admittedly this may be the product of unbalanced representation of participants from each category. In other words then, a targeted recruitment strategy which could effectively proportion each category would be in a better position to determine the influence of these factors. The unstructured secondary interviews conducted as corroborative material with the above consists of responses from two Buddhists of Sinhala ethnicity, one Muslim of Moor ethnicity, one Christian of Tamil ethnicity, and one Christian of Sinhala-Burger ethnicity. These interviews were also undertaken during the same time period as those above, and participants represent the locales of Western, North Western, and Southern provinces. All interviews – both primary and secondary - were conducted in English without the need of a translator. Alongside these secondary interviews, additional supplementary data collection includes certain observations I had noted whilst active in Sri Lanka that have been documented using the journaling technique, and also references to several national newspaper articles acquired during fieldwork which seemed pertinent to the primary data yield.

2.2.2. Interview Structure and Preparation

I decided to opt for a semi-structured interview model for this purpose, as this would allow for the collection of data in precise correspondence to the points of prior hypothesizing (Schensul et al 1999: 150).My intention was to conduct all interviews 'face-to-face' with participants. Whilst I remained open to the prospect though of alternatively collecting data either via telephone or email, I prioritized face-to-face interviews in this instance for I considered their associated risks affecting response assurance and data quality to be comparatively minimal and therefore preferable when compared to the challenges linked with these other methods. Bailey for instance acknowledges studies which suggest the participants could be less likely to commit to telephone interviews (Bailey 1994: 201), whilst King & Horrocks note that some qualitative researchers argue that telephone interviews preclude a more nuanced appreciation of participant response due to the lack of visual clues accompanying them (King & Horrocks 2010: 82). With regards to email interviews, Lowndes claims that email exchanges can suffer from both abbreviated and obscured expression (Lowndes 2005: 109-111).The question of how to structure my interview script was determined by a series of queries modelled upon previous desk-based research which amounted to several hypothetical considerations concerning the Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives. The idea here was to ensure that I would be asking questions of participants which would directly address each aspect of these considerations, which may be phrased as follows:

1. How aware do Sri Lankan Hindus seem to be of inter-religious peace-building, and what are their perspectives of the effectiveness of this approach to conflict resolution as well as the organizations which facilitate it?

2. To what extent do the Sri Lanka Hindu community appear to have been involved in the work of these organizations, and to what degree would they consider such experiences as having been positive and valuable?

3. Has the presence of the militant Tamil separatism in any way affected the Sri Lankan Hindu community's engagement with inter-religious peace organizations?

4. Are any contentions between faith groups in Sri Lanka considered by Hindus to have been obstructive to successful inter-religious engagement, and have they posed any challenges or concerns for Hindus who either have participated, or are considering participation, in inter-religious peace efforts?

Accordingly, it seemed that in order to take advantage of the precision available to me when using the semi-structured interview model, I ought to construct the interview script so as to pointedly address these questions which I have termed 'research outcome objectives'. I have included a copy of the interview script as 'Appendix B' in this thesis, and from this document one may observe that questions 2 & 8-11 correspond to first of these research outcome objectives, whilst questions 3-7 correspond to the second, questions 1& 16-18 correspond to the third, and questions 12-15 correspond to the fourth and final of these research outcome

objectives. What emerged then was a semi-structured interview script of 18 questions long which allocated near enough equal attention to each of the research outcome objectives I was intending to fulfil. Nevertheless prior to its application in the field, it appeared necessary to test the prospective worth of the interview script to some degree before engaging in the actual interview process. While a suggestion of a pilot scheme immediately comes to mind here, the reality of my own context exerted enormous pressure against the viability of such an endeavour, no matter how desirable it had initially seemed. A BBC News article from 2008 claims that the then current Sri Lankan Tamil population living in the UK was estimated to be around 150,000 strong, according to those within the community itself. This same article also provides a map displaying the geographic distribution of Sri Lankan expatriates and refugees in the UK, clearly demonstrating an overwhelming bias towards Greater London and its immediate outlying areas, which can be corroborated in the work of Ratnapalan (Ratnapalan 2012: 1542).

Far from Greater London, my own research base in the North of England however evidently is not home to anything in the way of a sizeable Sri Lankan community, meaning that an unfeasible relocation would be mandated for an intensive pilot to be implemented. As such, though I was unable to conduct much in the way of a veritable pilot study, I had nonetheless the opportunity to test the interview script through two apposite personal connections. I had prior to beginning this research befriended a Sri Lankan Tamil expatriate who had fled Sri Lanka to escape the violence of the Civil War. Additionally, through university study I had contact with a student who was a Sri Lankan national of mixed Tamil-Sinhala heritage. In terms of socio-economic parity each of these individuals represented disparate echelons, with

the former having consistently been employed at junior stations in the service industry in both Sri Lanka and the UK, whilst the latter came from a professional managerial background also in each of these contexts. This disparity in turn reflected their socio-economic backgrounds, which in theory according to the research of Bernaisch largely determined their facility with the English language (Bernaisch 2012: 281). Why English language ability would be of interest to me anyway will be outlined shortly in sub-section 2.3.2 of this chapter, though in terms of any preparatory testing of the interview script, such was a foremost concern due to the need for the English used during the interview sessions to be appropriate for my target population.

To assist me in determining a suitable standard of English language for the interview script, I thought it prudent to present the existing draft of the interview script alongside the consent forms to these two individuals with a view to incorporating any feedback into a vocabulary revision if required. The outcome of this exercise was several minor adjustments to the text of both the interview script and the consent form to accommodate for the general simplified standard of English requisite in order to access as diverse a selection of the Sri Lankan Hindu community as would be possible. Supporting this main body of interview data taken from specifically the Sri Lankan Hindu community, are a small number of additional interviews from non-Hindu Sri Lankans that have been included so as to supplement and corroborate the data forming the main body where appropriate. In contrast to the pre-structured formal interviews of the main body, these secondary supplementary interviews were not pre-structured and their need arose only spontaneously in response to certain matters disclosed within the main series of interviews. As such no particular

consistency is evident in terms of length of questioning, as this was entirely relative to the issue at hand. This batch of supplementary interviews was largely opportunistic in that I had not actively sought them out, nor had I planned for their specific inclusion within this thesis. Rather as my primary interview data began to amass, I noticed areas within the results that may benefit from further elaboration from a different and more directly relevant source. Accordingly where the opportunity arose that I happened to encounter such a source, I attempted to gather the necessary data to supplement the areas in question.

2.2.3. Specific Ethical Considerations

Due to this thesis amounting to a research project involving the use of human participants involving the discussion of matters of a sensitive nature[18], the associated social and psychological risk involved prompted a full ethical review of my intended work by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Such determined that by discussing events and concepts related to a period of intense violence, one may potentially encounter participants who had in the course of surviving such times either witnessed or suffered any associated trauma. By initiating any such dialogue that may reopen memories of this kind, a researcher could in effect be encouraging some participants to relive unsettling experiences and thus suffer harmful psychological repercussions as a consequence (Brooks 2013: 57). Furthermore the UREC suggested that by presenting questions which might allude to the political

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[18] In this instance defined specifically as the violence and strife associated with periods of warfare and ethnic discord, as well as the

allegiances of participants, there may be a danger that they could be persecuted for possessing such sensibilities by competing parties (Mosley 2013: 15).

My proposed safeguard to ensure that delicate subject matter is handled appropriately to defend against any psychological injury among prospective participants was to adjust the consent form to include a clause intended to filter out vulnerable individuals from participation. The document entitled 'Appendix A' located in the Appendixes of this thesis is a copy of the consent form used for the main pre-structured interviews and the unstructured supplementary interviews. Within which, please regard Clause 5 as evidence of how the consent forms had been tailored to warn potential participants of this possible danger whilst inviting them to consider their own vulnerability to this risk, to then firmly advise them against participation if they feel that they are at significant risk in this respect. As a contingency to this, note also how this same clause of the consent form clarifies that in order to further protect the wellbeing of participants, the researcher is to remain vigilant during the interview process so as to identify any signs of psychological stress. This became decidedly necessary in the situation that any vulnerable participants misjudge the extent of their vulnerability. In any such case of this, it then specifies that the researcher would terminate the interview and direct participants to an appropriate source of support. Conducting these interviews then via face-to-face appeared ever more desirable in light of this, because it is ostensibly easier to identify signs of psychological struggle visually (Irvine et al 2013: 91) by prompts such as negative shifts in body language and demeanour (Mason 2002: 75).

The matter of potentially unveiling the political sentiments of participants seemed problematic primarily due to the possibility of them appearing to lend support to the LTTE, or perhaps even in some cases, implicating themselves in some of the organization's activities. The LTTE are a registered terrorist organization by the Sri Lankan Government, meaning that to belong to this organization constitutes a criminal act, and thus to imply or state that one condones them or their activities could be construed as being suspect. Moreover, if any participant professed to having been actively involved with the LTTE, then this of course could be construed as evidencing an admission to illegal conduct. It has been noted by some scholars that in the wake of the LTTE insurgency numerous individuals allegedly connected to this organization have been reportedly abducted in extra-judicial operations commanded by the Sri Lankan State (Kingsbury 2012: 80 & Thiranagama 2013: 103). Though the Sri Lankan administration continues to deny these allegations, there still remains scope to doubt that Sri Lankan nationals deemed to be affiliated with the LTTE would be guaranteed protection of the law and access to fair judicial proceedings if identified by the State authorities. Accordingly for their safety, the consent form extended the measure of full anonymity to all participants. After viewing a draft of the consent form attached to the main proposal, the REC became satisfied with these precautions and countermeasures, thereby granting approval of this research.

2.2.4. System of Data Analysis

I determined that the most apposite approach to adopt when undertaking the analysis of this data set and communication of its findings was that of thematic analysis, and this was due to the interview questions themselves corresponding to the four queries based upon hypothetical considerations concerning the Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace efforts that were listed previously. Such appeared easily translatable into themes for the analysis and presentation of data, as question responses would already be segmented into groups related to a single discussion point. Thus where the first of these queries, located at the onset of Chapter 6, reads: '*How aware do Sri Lankan Hindus seem to be of inter-religious peace-building, and what are their perspectives of the effectiveness of this approach to conflict resolution as well as the organizations which facilitate it?*', the associated first theme would be '*Awareness of Inter-Religious Peace-Building among Sri Lankan Hindus, and their Perspectives of its Efficacy and the Organizations that have Facilitated It*'. The thematic analysis of this data presented within Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis will continue in such a manner until all of these queries have been similarly represented and discussed as themes within the data collected.

Finally, it is imperative to note Jansen's important natural distinction between qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis. Where the latter seeks to appropriate data samples with a view to extrapolating generalizable conclusions, the former in contrast endeavours to 'document diversity' within data sets so as to evidence constituent trends present (Jansen 2010: 4). What this means then in relation to this present research is that participant responses here are not to be regarded as wholly representative of the target population to which they belong. The crux of this thesis was to arbitrate various hypothetical challenges to Sri Lankan Hindus positively

responding to inter-religious peace initiatives, and to thereafter evidence the existence or absence of these challenges. The objective then was not to assess the scale of these challenges amongst the greater target population in question, for it was instead to simply attempt to identify the actuality of their presence amongst the target population. Accordingly it was qualitative, rather than quantitative, analysis that was necessitated in this instance. Thus where it is observable that 39% of primary interview participants claimed to have been involved in the activities of inter-religious peace organizations, one ought not to relate to this statistic as representative of wider target population behaviour, as not only would this deviate away from the rationale of the study, but given the ratio of participants to their total population[19] such inference would be subject to too greater a margin of error to be valid in any case.

2.3. Challenges and Critiques

2.3.1. Limitations of Study Purview

As the previous chapter detailed, the fundamental structure of this thesis is predicated upon a quasi-positivistic approach to research in that it deduces a series of four hypotheses that emerged as a reflection on preparatory reading, which it then tests according to the ethnographic instruments of data collection which this chapter has now outlined. The principal benefit of this approach seemed to be the rigidity of

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[19] Primary interview participants numbered 28, whereas the total population of Sri Lankan Hindus stands at approximately 2,554,606 (Department of Census & Statistics, Sri Lanka 2012). As such, it would be absurd to attempt to generalize these results in the manner of quantitative analysis.

its focus, meaning that data collection methods can be tailored to extracting very specific information from the research context, which the researcher can then proceed to explore in depth. With primary participant interviews for example, the semi-structured format is engineered such that it allows each interview to explore questions related only to the stipulated hypotheses, thus devoting the entirety of the interview process to this end. As far as the discipline of ethnography is concerned, Burgess presents its methodology as being classically non-restrictive and fluidly responsive to the mutable conditions of the field in terms of data acquisition (Burgess 1982: 15). Accordingly, should a more conventional ethnographic approach have been adopted which afforded greater openness to data, arguably other pertinent observations could come to light which were not initially anticipated in prior hypothesizing. In terms specific to this research, this could mean that there may be significant elements of Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives that were not given any consideration as part of the hypotheses tested. Consequently, though this research as it stands would still have established how certain Hindus have responded to inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka, such needs to be appreciated as being to an extent limited by having curtailed the breadth of these responses solely in relation to the four hypotheses covered.

An argument was made in the previous chapter concerning the decision to frame Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in practice exclusively in relation to four particular nationally-oriented organizations, ultimately on the basis of pragmatics. During the course of this, a few other localized inter-religious peace organizations were highlighted and discounted from further consideration within the

thesis, such as NEIFR, which operates solely within the boundaries of a single city within Sri Lanka's Northern Province. In response to this decision, a critique may be levelled that is similar to the above, in that only taking into consideration Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peacebuilding defined in practice along the lines of specific organizations means that, once again, these responses may exclude other relevant material which informs the wider Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to this movement. It may have been the case, for instance, that certain primary interview participants who had declined involvement in the activities of any of the four inter-religious peace organizations considered within the scope of this research opted to instead become involved with a local inter-religious peace initiative not taken into account here. At least in theory there was nothing expressly preventing any participants in this situation from divulging such information, whilst perhaps they may have even been likely to have raised such a point given how closely related it is to the general subject area of the research. However, without being asked directly about this, or indeed without being asked more generally about their relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives, there was no guarantee that such information would come to light under the methodology currently underpinning this thesis.

Brewer remarks though that a key issue presented by the broad, open-ended data collection in the approach of normative ethnography is its inherently unsystematic nature, which does not ensure consistency across each episode of data collection within a given study (Brewer 2000: 20). What this would mean in relation to primary participant interviews for example, is that it would be difficult to extract a series of data sets which could be analysed in systematic correspondence with one another, as there would likely be no uniformity in their structure. Ergo, even if this thesis had

sought to explore Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in a fashion which shed the aforementioned limitations, it would still not have featured a methodology that was beyond reproach. As such, whilst the methodology of this thesis does not offer an entirely comprehensive exploration of Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka, it nevertheless still sheds light upon important aspects of this relationship within the confines of such limitations. There remains then the opportunity for further academic inquiry into the Sri Lankan Hindu community's reception of inter-religious peace initiatives using this thesis as a foundational impetus, particularly given that the literature review in the previous chapter confirms this thesis to be the first in-depth glance at this in any capacity. For example, the data gathered within this thesis could provide the basis for a comparative study which contrasts Sri Lankan Hindu perceptions and experiences of nationally-oriented inter-religious peace initiatives with the community's perceptions and experiences of inter-religious peace organizations which are instead bound to a specific locale.

2.3.2. Linguistic Disparities

Of course this 'multimethodology' as just defined was not at first sight without its fair share of potential practical limitations and pitfalls. Nevertheless none of these proved substantial enough to prevent its undertaking, although there are arguable limitations as a consequence. One issue in this regard was that of prospective language disparities between researcher and participants. I am aware that because I did not speak either Sinhala or Tamil this could raise some initial concern; however I was

also aware of the growth of the study and use of the English language and the importance that it has been afforded in contemporary Sri Lanka. Ostler describes how English has been strategically employed in contemporary Sri Lanka as a mutual linking language between the different individuals and communities in the island who are not in possession of the same native tongue (Ostler 2010: 13). Thus with Sri Lanka's Tamil and Sinhala communities who ordinarily maintain the distinct languages of Tamil and Sinhala respectively within intra-group contexts, in order for these groups to communicate effectively with one another English has been emplaced as an intermediary auxiliary language to which both of these communities can equally relate without confusion. It seems that the choice of English to be utilized as a *lingua franca* in Sri Lanka is rooted in official national legislation, with the country's revised Constitution endowing English with this very function (Policy Research & Information Unit of the Presidential Secretariat of Sri Lanka 2003) presumably due to the imprint left behind courtesy of a lengthy period of British colonization in the island.

The use of English as *lingua franca* in Sri Lanka affected the proceedings of data accumulation in this research through effectively minimizing the risk posed by this researcher's lack of familiarity with the island's indigenous tongues. English language education has been firmly introduced with government measures as a 'second language' within the nation's public schooling system in order realize its purpose as *lingua franca* (Liyanage 2004: 13). It is also suggested that the learning of English for Sri Lankans is frequently responded to with an enthusiasm stemming from the desirability factor of English linguistic competence as a mechanism for social and professional improvement in Sri Lanka (Bernaisch 2012: 281). According

to Ostler though the use of English as the 'link language' between otherwise linguistically estranged peoples in Sri Lanka was an ultimately doomed endeavour with the prominence of Sinhala nationalism in post-colonial modernity, due to its overwhelming association with past colonial subjugation and oppression (Ostler 2010: 14). It would seem though nonetheless that there is evidence provided by Bernaisch that is to the contrary. Bernaisch observes that proficient knowledge of English in Sri Lanka is associated with social elites, and in fact any reluctance to acquiring English language skills arises instead from class distinctions. What this means is that lower social classes in Sri Lanka are generally understood to be less motivated in the learning of English due to them believing that such a skill only has worth for the privileged elites (Bernaisch 2012: 281). In fact ever since the English language came to be settled into the native vocabulary following the British colonization of Sri Lanka, it seems to have been most closely associated with the higher social echelons in both the island's Tamil and Sinhala communities (Fernando 1977: 342).

Nevertheless, despite these previous class biases, the contemporary effort to propagate English language learning in Sri Lanka seems at least in theory to reject uneven distribution amongst class backgrounds, given the broad public scope projected by the governmental English campaigns (Indraratne 2012: 18)[20]. English language education is today then widely proliferated across all socio-economic boundaries with increasing governmental pressure. It may also be worthy to note that with Sri Lankan Hinduism being overwhelmingly representative of the Tamil

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[20]As this article explains, since the cessation of the Civil War the Sri Lankan government has begun to break down the elite monopoly on English language skills in the nation, by targeting the public masses irrespective of socio-economic divisions.

minority, such may also predispose the leadership of this community to be particularly proficient with the English language. Why this seems likely to be so is that during the British colonization of Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Tamils actually benefitted socio-economically from the administration's institutionalized discrimination (McGilvray 2008: 4), despite Rotberg being under the impression that Sri Lankan Tamils were just generally more savvy than their Sinhala counterparts in capitalizing on the professional opportunities arising from colonial connections (Rotberg 1999: 5). As a consequence, Sri Lankan Tamils generally became more closely affiliated with the colonial regime, meaning that many enjoyed greater exposure to the English language which was the 'everyday' mode of communication for those working within the British administration in Sri Lanka (Fernando 1989: 186). The British Empire's bias towards employing the Tamil minority in clerical positions within this Sri Lankan colony has since also granted these Tamils greater social standing for their progeny who in turn would benefit from higher standards of living, including stronger educational opportunities which of course would include the availability of first-rate English language training.

Hence with English becoming associated with ethnic discrimination at Sinhala expense, early post-independence Sinhala political reformers adopted an anti-English language standpoint in their policy (Ostler 2010: 14). However this Sinhala ethnonationalist rally against English language use in Sri Lanka curiously to a certain extent actually galvanized the Tamil community's relationship to it. Canagarajah explains that in defiance of domineering contemporary Sinhala identity politics, certain aggrieved pockets of educated Sri Lankan Tamils have continued to favour English speaking as a way of asserting their rejection of Sinhala political oppression

(Canagarajah 1999: 67). Yet where once English was becoming marginalized by the Sinhala community in the wake of politicized ethnic consciousness, the developing nation of Sri Lanka has in recent times witnessed a reversal in this perspective with a newfound aspiration towards an increased global economic presence of which public English proficiency seems a vital ingredient (Hopper 2007: 91). In summary then it is possible to defend the viability of this research project by highlighting the *lingua franca* status of English in Sri Lanka, and how Tamils – the ethnic group to which the vast majority of those who were to be interviewed belonged – have appeared to exhibit particular affinity with English due to the political connotations attached. In practice, this riposte seemed justified in that evidently all of interviews were successful conducted using an English language medium. However, one still ought to consider how relying upon the second language of participants during interviews may have to some degree handicapped participants' ability to comprehensively communicate their thoughts within responses (Song and Parker 1995: 252).

Accordingly then, it is agreed across many scholarly works that ideally interviewing would be conducted using the language format most familiar to participants (see Lopez 2003: 53 and Hunter 2007: 98). Whilst this may seem an acceptable point of contention as regards this data yield, such is not of course a certainty that participant responses in a second language necessarily would be to the detriment of the answer quality as Liamputtong explains (Liamputtong 2010: 137). Instead it seems utilizing participants' native language may be favourable because it constitutes a firmer guarantee that participants are afforded the opportunity to express themselves with optimum precision. In the case of this research then, whilst it may be desirable for me as the researcher to have conducted interviews in the primary language of

participants, the reality of having settled for participants' second language should not be assumed axiomatically as impacting upon the quality of response they were able to provide. In each case, my arbitration of an individual participant's suitability for interview was based solely on their capability to engage in conversation with me via English. There are many in Sri Lanka, including a certain number of those interviewed, who had self-taught English skills or had otherwise acquired them outside of a classroom context. For instance, I had learned during my travels in Sri Lanka that it appears commonplace for individuals to have learned English via casual instruction from friends or family, particularly those who had emigrated to work in locations where English is either the *lingua franca* for migrant workers (e.g. Dubai or the Philippines) or indeed where it is the spoken norm (e.g. the UK or Australia).

In light of the above then, to have pursued a methodology which vetted prospective participants on the basis of demonstrable competency of English skills by way of formal qualification, would have excluded such aforementioned individuals despite them appearing equally as able to articulate using English as those who had benefitted from formal schooling. Moreover given the association between formal English training and higher socio-economic status, to recruit participants in this way would have imparted a severe class bias within the data. Admittedly there is already present a slight socio-economic bias within the purview of primary interview participants, and this is the consequence of developed English language skills tending to be the possession of Sri Lankans hailing from higher socio-economic backgrounds. However with many participants interviewed that were from lower socio-economic tiers having either only received informal English language training,

or having instead supplemented basic formal training with further informal tuition, to have rejected potential participants on the grounds that they lacked authorized evidence of their English proficiency would have ensured that this bias was far more prominent. Ultimately though, as the analysis of original data in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will later demonstrate, the quality and richness of the information gathered through participant interviews is sufficient evidence that having conducted them in English was ostensibly not to the detriment of this research. That said, there will always remain the possibility though that interviews conducted in participants' first language could have yielded a more nuanced and detailed dataset.

2.3.3. Gender Bias

Perhaps though the most obvious deficiency within the data yield of this research concerns gender, with all participants involved in the study having been male. Such was from the earliest point of conceiving this methodology an anticipated bias, given the religio-cultural context into which this research was to probe. The work of Dhanraj et al describe the status of women in Sri Lankan Tamil communities to be conventionally inferior to that of men, deeming general gender perceptions within Tamil society as being predicated upon a 'patriarchal cultural ideology' (Dhanraj et al 2004: 87). Nevertheless studies into the Tamil migrant population of Canada suggests that Sri Lankan Tamil society features an oxymoronic combination of matriarchy and patriarchy, with the dominance of men only becoming manifest in the public sphere whilst domestically, it is the senior female figures who supposedly occupy the social power base of family life (Magocsi 1999: 1251). Being historically a

largely Hindu community though, traditional Tamil gender constructs are therefore directly influenced by the dictates of Hindu religious thought. Hinduism has normatively taught that women occupy a subordinate role to that of men, with their scope of activity falling under the jurisdiction of a senior male relative – be that a father, brother or husband, depending on a female's marital status and domestic arrangements at any given point (Sugirtharajah 1998: 67). Reflecting on this, in Sri Lankan Tamil society it is the norm for parents to exercise a certain 'control' over the lives of their daughters up until a suitable marriage occurs, whereupon this authority is then transferred to the husband who is now responsible for safeguarding the virtue of the woman (Manoranjan 2010: 141). In contemporary Hindu Tamil communities inhabiting the Indian mainland for example, high-caste women can even be consigned to a domestic role to the extent that they are forbidden from leaving the household (Smith 2003: 115).

Accordingly the prospective diminished public presence of women within Sri Lankan Tamil communities alone would suggest that women would unlikely be in a position to participate in this research. However it must be noted that in contemporary Sri Lankan Hindu communities, women can be very much involved in communal participation in terms of public temple worship (Baumann 2006: 184). Notwithstanding this, the question still remains of whether it would prove feasible to broaden the purview of participation to include both those of male and female gender. Given the apparent nature of Tamil societal norms though, there seems the possibility – should the opportunity have even arisen – that approaching Sri Lankan Hindu women as an unfamiliar male outsider for private interaction may be perceived as an affront to their modesty (Seizer 2005: 412). One then should consider this

admission as a candid statement of relative deficiency in terms of the representative nature of the sample parameters. Preferably of course an integration of female Sri Lankan Hindu perspectives would be welcome, although there appeared no feasible way to accomplish this without perhaps the assistance of a female insider which would have proved in any case a highly problematic exercise due to the very reasons for which they would be needed in the first instance. With gender then being an immutable aspect of my character, the conventional norms of social interaction among Sri Lankan Hindus suggested that the perspectives of female members of the Sri Lankan Hindu community were in a sense fated to be absent from the data.

From existing literature, it is difficult to confirm the presence of Sri Lankan Hindu women in inter-religious peace activities, as works which identify Hindu engagement do not make any reference to the gender of those involved. However, based upon the restraints inherent to the conventional social position of Sri Lankan Hindu women which largely confines them to the domestic sphere, perhaps it could be the case that many might have been unable to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations. On the other hand though, it is clear from the work of both Spachić-Šiljak (2014) and D'Souza (2004) amongst a growing body of research in this area (Hayward 2015: 308), that women have actively participated in, and even occasionally orchestrated, grassroots inter-religious peacebuilding efforts in the respective contexts of the Balkans and Israel-Palestine. Although inter-religious peace work continues to be a predominantly androcentric domain, particularly in terms of access to the capacity to lead or facilitate such enterprises (Abu-Nimer 2013: 75), the aforementioned publications evidence that women are nevertheless beginning to make a significant impact upon this method of conflict resolution in

comparatively patriarchal environments. As such, there appears to be no doubt that any research into Sri Lankan inter-religious peace initiatives that overlooks the participation of women is to some extent compromised by this, particularly as the martial nature of female involvement in the LTTE (Alison 2009: 125) appears to suggest a certain degree of flexibility with regards to maintaining traditional gender roles in the Sri Lankan Hindu community.

Whilst then it is beyond doubt that an ideal representative sample of Sri Lankan Hindu perspectives should accommodate both genders present within this population, particularly in light of previous discussion which identifies the fruitful progress contributed by female participants within the realms of inter-religious peacebuilding, one ought to ultimately appreciate the prodigious difficulty of this for the prospective researcher of any gender. The mores of Tamil Hindu society as previously explored, would determine that it would be considered inappropriate for non-related members of opposing genders to engage in private interaction. In effect then, such entails that collecting interview data which is comprehensively representative of Sri Lankan Hindus is indeed a problematic endeavour in either scenario as regards the researcher's gender. Contrastingly should I have instead been female, I would have perhaps been unable to have interviewed Sri Lankan Hindu men. In addition to this, female travellers are cautioned whilst journeying through Sri Lanka due to incidents of sexual assault reported against lone foreign women (Lonely Planet 2012: 226; Foreign & Commonwealth Office 2014; Fazlulhaq 2014), and so this would raise consequent ethical contentions related to pragmatics of a female researcher undertaking such a project. In any possible scenario then, the

researcher undertaking this thesis would have struggled to collect a thoroughly representative data sample concerning gender.

2.3.4. Geo-Cultural Estrangement and Participant Recruitment Strategy

It is approximately 5466 miles between my current research base in the United Kingdom and Colombo, Sri Lanka's largest city. What is clearly an issue worthy of consideration here are the many elements that are associated with this degree of long-distance geographical separation between a researcher and their chosen subject. Whereas the task of collecting interview data would indeed prove much simpler if the researcher was based within the same locality as participants, the fact of the matter is that this is not the case. There are means by which vast distances between researcher and participation may be negotiated, namely via use of telecommunications and email. However scholars have identified certain concerns over the use of telephone and email communication as a means of conducting interviews which could prove quite problematic for this research, that would have to be acknowledged and addressed should the need arise. Such can range from curt time and potential access limitations common to telephone interviews (Bernard 2011: 195), as well as email interviews posing the risk of non-response from participants at any point over the protracted period required for establishing a relationship of the kind conducive to qualitative inquiry (King & Horrocks 2010: 89). Accordingly it was therefore preferable for me to sojourn in Sri Lanka, allowing ample time for face-to-face interviews to be conducted. On a related note to the geographical separation between myself as researcher and participants, I am also culturally alien to this

context. Previously I had discussed the implications of my being an 'outsider' with regards to the impact this may have upon my research in terms of subjective bias.

Yet accompanying the above was the consideration of how my outsider status may be perceived by participants whom are my polar opposite in terms of the insider-outsider dynamic. It seems rather complex, almost to the point of impossible, to arbitrate just how target participants would perceive me since it is ignorant to assume uniformity herein. To sample a demographic cross-section from any given society is by nature bound to present the observer with a relative variance in perspectives on subjective matters, such as depictions of cultural or national identity. I am situated in contrast to any Sri Lankan national primarily in terms of my own national identity in being a British citizen. Moreover with Caucasian ethnic identity, I am at a yet further distance from my target participants. I understand this combination of national and ethnic identity is what largely reflects my cultural persona to an 'other' in these terms, and so therefore have to become aware of what my cultural image as the researcher projects towards participants and how this may perturb relations (Lewis 2003: 65). The ensuing question is then, what perceptions should I expect from participants and how would this affect the process of my research? Prior to entering the field, it was rather problematic for me to here attempt to determine such due to both the inevitable diversity of perspectives that would be present amongst participants, being as I was significantly alien to the current Sri Lankan *zeitgeist*. Nevertheless, I still felt it important to reflect upon this question of how I may possibly be received by interviews on these terms, as this would have significant ramifications for the viability of the research.

My first consideration was that Sri Lanka was for more than a century annexed under British colonial rule, which ended with the struggle for independence culminating in success in 1948. Already then one may identify a possible link between Britain and imperialist expansion in Sri Lankan popular perception, owing to the nature of this historically predominate form of contact between these two nations. Colonialism is understandably a concept which universally continues to resonate with trauma and so can still provoke potent sentiments from individuals, who by way of genetic or national heritage, identify with subjugation under this ideology (Battiste 2004: 215). Liamputtong warns that it can be difficult to acquire a participant's trust if the researcher hails from a cultural background that has historically oppressed members of the participants' own group (Liamputtong 2008: 6). In context then, could my own national identity entail that I'd receive antipathetical reactions from prospective participants due to a residual contempt towards the colonialist expansion of the British imperial regime? It would seem that an answer may depend somewhat on the ethnicity of a given participant. A tendency towards an Anglophobia of sorts may be observed within the Sri Lankan Sinhala community, as a consequence of certain ethnopolitical trends which have seemingly converted initial anti-colonialism into present anti-Western sentiments as time has progressed (Brewer 2010: 53). It was these same anti-Western political opinions that Ostler had identified as encouraging the call to reject the speaking of English in Sri Lanka. However Sri Lankan's of Sinhala ethnicity do not constitute the primary focus of this research, for in fact the only time I'd be likely to encounter ethnic Sinhala if at all would be during the surveying of Sri Lankan interfaith organizations.

Yet it is doubtful that such individuals would be averse to British nationals, given that most of these organizations display to some extent a connection with international sources that include links to the United Kingdom or its citizens. Though what of Sri Lankan Hindus, who are predominately of Tamil ethnicity? Does this ethnic community like their Sinhala counterparts, contain any strong currents of anti-Western opinion? It would seem that although Sri Lankan Tamils did contribute to the anti-colonial movement aimed at relinquishing the British control over Sri Lanka, there seems no initial evidence to suggest that current popular politics of the Tamil community is imbued with a particular resentment of 'Western' nations such as Britain. However, Tanner argues that any researcher at variance with the national identity of a target population is likely to experience an initial distrust, as communities can perceive the academic's neutral pursuit of knowledge as unusual (Tanner 2008: 279). Perhaps though with the Tamils having fared relatively well under British colonial rule, or at least comparatively so than in relation the Sinhala, their own popular image of the British might not have become so tarnished. Nevertheless it is not so much an issue of politics as religion that could prove problematic in my approaching the Sri Lankan Hindu community. I was conscious that as a Caucasian British national representing an institution with a Christianized name that I may be stereotyped by Sri Lankan Hindus as an adherent of Christianity. Such seemed potentially challenging given that through prior research I became aware that relationships between Hindus and Christians in Sri Lanka were alleged to have been recently strained under accusations that Christians have 'unlawfully' pursued the conversion of non-Christian faith communities.

This matter is discussed within Chapter 4, though at present it will suffice to say that I was aware that if I was characterized by Sri Lankan Hindus as Christian due to my cultural background, then there was the risk that certain prospective participants may wish to avoid involvement in my research on the suspicion that I may have a subversive agenda to promote Christianity and/or even produce a libel against Hinduism through my work. In an analogous case illustrating the point, Beals claims that field researchers in the midst of Roman Catholic populations in Latin America are often suspected of being covertly Protestant missionaries, meaning that access can be prevented by way of this misconception (Beals 2006: 44). Thus while gaining the trust of interviewees initially seemed as though it could be potentially problematic given the connotations of my national and cultural identity, I had to also consider the sensitivity of the socio-political context into which I was embarking. Bowd & Özerdem remind any researcher attempting to extract data from within a 'post-conflict environment (PCE)' that suspicions of outsiders are typically heightened due to lingering insecurity following the cessation of violence, and as such the use of a 'gatekeeper' figure should be acknowledged as absolutely necessary (Bowd & Özerdam 123-124). In order then to progress with this research which was attempting to access a demographic at the crux of a post-conflict situation, it therefore seemed cogent to locate a gatekeeper, which Seidmann describes as a trusted member of legitimate influence and authority within a population, whether formally in the case of institutions, or informally where official hierarchy is not present (Seidmann 2013: 47-49).

Religious communities then it seems can feature both formal and informal gatekeepers, including religious functionaries in terms of the former (Murchison

2010: 30) and with regards to the latter there may be individuals elevated to a revered position due to maturity or pious repute (Chryssides & Geaves 2014: 267). The benefit of a gatekeeper being an individual of high esteem within a community suggests that they can be instrumental regarding participant recruitment, for as to associate with them lends to the researcher an air of reliability (Crano & Brewer 2002: 237). Nevertheless the immediate issue pertaining to this was the very estrangement from this community that I was attempting to overcome, as gatekeepers are obviously local to the context of the targeted population (Dewalt & Dewalt 2002: 36). Therefore this entails that any prospective gatekeeper would also regard me as the outsider, and so it would be naïve to assume that trust would be automatically granted. Emmel et al posit that trust can be gradually earned from 'hard-to-reach' groups, which evidently the PCE based Sri Lankan Hindu community appeared to be, by the researcher becoming immersed within communal activities involving the group whilst also just being generally present among them (Emmel et al 2007: 2). At such a distance the internet appeared the most proficient tool with which to locate a suitable gate-keeper, for Scott reports successfully acquiring gatekeepers through issuing a written research brief to targeted individuals, containing an outline of the research rationale and ethical safeguards which would be observed during its undertaking (Scott 2005: 161).

Accordingly, I began engaging in email correspondence with some of the inter-religious peace organizations and other prominent Sri Lankan religious leaders connected with inter-religious dialogue – such as the Archbishop of Colombo – who maintained an online presence. Note that I was unable to find any contacts with any leadership figures of the Sri Lankan Hindu community other than the All Ceylon

Hindu congress, which is an organization established in 1955 to unite the various elements of the Sri Lankan Hindu community and sustain their continuity (All Ceylon Hindu Congress 2014). In all cases though of attempted email correspondence, communication began breaking down before any useful information or contacts could be learned. In one case this was due to death of an organization's executive figure, which appeared to have sent its entire administrative operation into disarray. In other cases emails were rejected, or were simply forgotten about as I would learn at a later date when my requests were obsolete. As time continued progressing, I remained confronted with an impending research excursion into a context to which I was still very much on the periphery. It seemed then that the only viable option remaining to me was to arrive in Sri Lanka, and thereafter attempt to locate a gatekeeper whilst 'on the ground'. I decided then that I required as direct an encounter as possible with the Sri Lankan Hindu community, as I had calculated this to be the most promising lead in terms of making contact with a trusted community member.

As my target research population was one essentially defined by religiosity, the issue of where to experience such concentrated contact with this community appeared not in the least complex due to public expressions of worship being common amongst Hindus. Sri Lankan Hindus it seemed frequented temple complexes known locally as 'kovils'. I decided that my approach would be to visit one of these kovils at a peak time with the aim of meeting an individual who could act as a gatekeeper for my research. Yet contrary to any prior expectations, in doing this I inadvertently discovered a system which defied the recommendation of scholars regarding the necessity of a gatekeeper. My initial experience of kovils yielded far greater a result than anticipated firstly in terms of forging a relationship with the Sri Lankan Hindu

community, and secondly with regards to gaining interview data. In fact the overwhelming majority of the main interview data was gathered from participants whom I had met whilst attending *kovils*, without the assistance of a gate-keeper. Perhaps the logistical inferences of this statement are that I visited *kovils*, selected individuals who also were in attendance there, and then introduced myself with a view to offering them participation in my research. Much to the contrary, the reality of my experiences here were far more bountiful than one might presume, and this was precisely due it seems to my novel appearance. For the sake of clarification here I must divulge that I am a relatively heavily tattooed individual, alongside having modified my earlobes by using the 'stretching' technique. What this entailed then was that along with my ethnicity, I was quite visually disparate from almost all others within my fieldwork context as this kind of body modification is extremely rare amongst Sri Lankans.

Consistently throughout my travels in Sri Lanka I was recurrently stopped by locals of all religions and ethnicities to enter into a conversation about my tattoos, which then escalated into further topics being discussed such as my national origin and the purpose of my visit to Sri Lanka. Hindus attending *kovils* were no exception to this trend. As such from my very first call into a *kovil* I experienced numerous individuals approaching me to comment on my tattoos, and from there the aforementioned typical discussion pattern followed to the point where participation in my research could be offered – or in the majority of cases, individuals would volunteer themselves for participation. Similar to my tattoos, my stretched earlobes also provoked a certain curiosity amongst Sri Lankans. Contrastingly however, whereas my tattoos seemed to claim attention from all ethnic and religious groups, my stretched ears appeared

only of interest – at least in so much as they alone would comment on them - to Hindus. Where it seemed that tattoos generated intrigue because of their general scarcity within Sri Lankan society, stretched ears on the other hand were reminiscent for Hindus of the deity Shiva. Popular representations of Shiva portray him as having stretched earlobes identical to my own, due to this particular modification's association with royalty or lordship in Hindu cultures (Jansen 1999: 35). Accordingly it was not uncommon for me to be approached whilst attending *kovils* by Hindus who would begin communication with something along the lines of 'Your ear (points), you look like Mahadev' or 'Your ears are the same as Shiva'.

This initial curiosity would almost invariably precede a question of whether I was present at the *kovil* for partaking in *pūjā*, allowing me to deny this and inform them of my research in response, which in turn often led to the recruitment of participants. Note that it is not unusual within Hinduism to express one's devotion to a deity through physically imitating them, for such is notably the practice of Saivite *sadhus* (Rinehart 2004: 108). Perhaps also this subtle association with the image of Shiva could have lent somewhat of an air of familiarity to me, creating a perceived trustworthiness in the mind of potential participants. In addition it must also be regarded that frequently after being approached by Sri Lankan Hindus so that they may comment upon my body modifications, it transpired that many such individuals would suggest that I ought to investigate the '*vel kavadi*' or 'spear burden' that occurs during the *Thaipusam* festival of the Tamil Hindu calendar (Willford 2007: 66). The specific aspect of the *vel kavadi* which these individuals wished to draw my attention to was that of 'wearing *alaku*', being an act of ritual self-mortification whereby male devotees of Murugan pierce their flesh with numerous hooks and

skewers representing spears to achieve atonement, acquire boons, or express thanks and devotion (Geaves 2006: 185). Evidently this amounts to an imposing feat of withstanding physical pain, and so I began to suspect that certain Sri Lankan Hindus had drawn a parallel between the act of being tattooed and the puncturing of the flesh involved whilst undertaking the *vel kavadi*.

Clothey comments that the ritual imparts a sense of worthiness to those who undertake it (Clothey 2006: 188). Accordingly with those who undergo the *vel kavadi* seemingly warranting the esteem of their contemporaries which I had encountered within the field, perhaps then I also managed to accrue the respect of Sri Lankan Hindus by having undergone a similar endurance exercise involving physical pain? Ultimately then the combination of my body modifications appeared to instill enough positive curiosity amongst Sri Lankan Hindus that they would approach me entirely on their own terms, leading to a conversation which became the impetus of participant recruitment. Admittedly this amounted to the opposite effect to what I had come to anticipate, given that Tracy ascribes significance to the physical appearance of a researcher, suggesting that it is preferable for them to present themselves in a similar way to participants (Tracy 2013: 71). My first thoughts were that tattoos in particular could be a handicap to this research effort. Such preconceptions may be a result of acknowledging a degree of conservative retention within Sri Lankan society pertaining to other matters otherwise relaxed under liberal thought, such as public dress standards and homosexual behaviour. Moreover, from personal experience of Sri Lankans in the UK, it did not seem that many possessed tattoos. In spite of this though, my body modifications proved an unpredictably valuable asset within the context of this research in that they became instrumental with regards to recruiting

interview participants. This not only applied during my numerous visits to *kovils*, but also routinely throughout the duration of my stay in Sri Lanka, with businessmen, labourers, drivers, police and so forth approaching me in a similar manner in public areas when I was not expecting or particularly intending to meet prospective participants.

Participant testimonies informing the supplementary interview data were initiated under similar conditions in public areas typically through a conversation started on their own initiative concerning my unusual appearance and/or the reason for my being in Sri Lanka whilst I was ostensibly non-native. It must be stated though that as far as the participant recruitment strategy was concerned, such is not an argument against the utility of a gatekeeper figure when conducting ethnographic research. Earlier within this chapter I had identified my attempts to cultivate relationships with various figures which could have functioned as gatekeepers via email communication. For various reasons – among them including death, business trips or simply neglected correspondence – it transpired that when my field research excursion was scheduled I was without a gatekeeper who would introduce me to my target population. This prompted an instantaneous need for improvisation, and what I opted for was an admittedly *ad hoc* approach to encountering my target population. However this still was not without its difficulties, for it appears that many *pūjāris* who have custody over *kovils* in Sri Lanka will refuse anyone entry if they have recently consumed meat, and I had not been made aware of this prior to experiencing it first-hand. Having been a strict vegetarian for approximately five years, I was able to inform those *pūjāris* encountered of this lifestyle choice, and thus managed to gain entry into their *kovil*. Vegetarians, though no longer such a rarity, still constitute a

small minority in my home context (Ashley et al 2004: 191), and it seems that Sri Lankans generally are aware of the European tendency to maintain meat-based diets. Accordingly, some *pūjāris* who seemed concerned that I may have consumed meat recently appeared somewhat sceptical that I as a European would be a vegetarian.

In spite of the above, explaining the rationale of my adherence to vegetarianism seemed to allay any initial doubts and thereby allowed me access to the interior of the *kovil*. Had my lifestyle choices been coherent with the statistical norm of my cultural context though, then I would of course have discovered my improvised participant recruitment method to have been at times highly problematic. In conclusion then though I had successfully accessed and procured interviewees from within my target population without the aid of a gatekeeper, I nonetheless realize the general desirability of gaining the assistance of a gatekeeper figure is only reinforced by my own experience within the field. Notwithstanding this though, the reality of conducting field work can evidently at times challenge the theoretical mechanics involved in navigating the task successfully, and so improvisation of this kind appears necessitated by the capriciousness of circumstance. However, a possible benefit of my particular means of participant recruitment was that it provided a more liberal access to prospective participants than if a gatekeeper was consulted. Seemingly an apparent jeopardy of the gatekeeper being selective in terms of which members of their community one is introduced to, for if as an invested insider the gatekeeper may wish to portray their community in a certain positive light, it is within their ability to direct the researcher to individuals who would depict them in this way (Hennink et al 2011: 93). By encountering then my target group without the

mediating influence of a gatekeeper, there is absent the chance that this research would have become steered towards a bias of this nature, and hence is ostensibly presenting a results yield which reflects impartial target population access in terms of participant opinion.

2.4. Conclusion

Initially there seemed a series of potential challenges to this research. Surveying the logistics of this thesis soon identified the primary methodological issues of linguistic disparity and geo-cultural estrangement between researcher and prospective participants, as well as there being potential for this interaction to ingrain a gender bias within the results yield. Yet throughout the course of this chapter I have demonstrated how I had attempted to effectively negotiate these challenges. However while this has been successful in certain respects, there were nonetheless elements of these challenges which proved inescapable, such as the issue of gender representation. Moreover, the initial appearance of certain concerns related to geo-cultural estrangement prove to be rather nebulous in practice, as to be an outsider in this regard did not seem to be a problematic discrepancy between researcher and participants. Rather it would appear that these differences provided advantages that were previously unforeseen. Yet the methodology of this thesis is not at all beyond the realm of critique, for it has yielded results that are not entirely representative of the Sri Lankan Hindu community, and which were also subject to the secondary language capabilities of participants. Though such concerns notwithstanding, I have

argued that these limitations do not undermine the relevance of this research, nor its ability to competently address the inquiry at the heart of this research.

Having defined in the previous chapter the parameters of my doctoral research, insomuch as what precisely I intended to research and my justification for doing so, this present chapter has elucidated how I have opted to employ qualitative ethnographic research methods as means of achieving this. The next chapter will begin to evaluate how the term 'conflict' should be understood once applied within the context of contemporary Sri Lanka. For the sake of clarity it is worth reiterating here that I have determined the timeframe referenced as 'contemporary' throughout the course of this research to be understood as reaching from 1983 until the present day. It is imperative consequently to begin explicating the definition of conflict herein, for this will provide important background detail with regards to understanding the role expected of inter-religious peacebuilding in this specific context. Moreover, it will also allow the position of the Sri Lankan Hindu community to be determined in relation to conflicting parties. The importance of this ensuing assessment is such that it forms the opening phase in the construction of a honed hypothetical deduction of the Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives, which the later aggregation of field data may be facilitated and measured against.

Chapter 3 - The Dimensions of Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka

3.1. The Mechanics of the Sri Lankan Civil War

3.1.1. Taxonomies of Conflict

When addressing the Sri Lankan Civil War, it seems customary for scholars to depict the conflict as belonging to a very specific category of dispute. The delineation 'ethnic conflict' is utilised by the likes of Gunawardana[21], McGilvray[22] and van den Berghe[23] as a means of aligning the Sri Lankan internal crisis to a particular manifestation of warfare. As a consequence therefore, one may then grasp something rather fundamental concerning the dynamics of the contextual acts of violence in contemporary Sri Lanka. That being the case then, how should one understand the term 'ethnic conflict' in relation to the events of the Sri Lankan Civil War? An obvious surface reading may be that this specifically 'ethnic conflict' in Sri Lanka is an episode of dispute between certain groups who differ from one another in terms of their ethnic identity (Brown 1993: 5). If one was to list the opposing combatants in the conflict, one would draw the contested frontier between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam[24] and the Sri Lankan Government. In terms of their ethnic composition, the LTTE are an inherently Tamil organisation, for it is to the arguable benefit of this particular ethnicity to which the entire LTTE agenda is bound.

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[21] See '*Historiography in a Time of Ethnic* Conflict: Construction of the Past in Contemporary Sri Lanka' by R A L H Gunawardana (1995).

[22] See '*Crucible of Conflict: Tamil and Muslim Society on the East Coast of Sri Lanka*' by Dennis B McGilvray (2008).

[23] Taken from Professor van den Berghe's blurb review of '*Ethnic Attachments in Sri Lanka: Social Change and Cultural Continuity*' by Lakshmanan Sabaratnam (2001).

[24] This is officially and commonly abbreviated as the 'LTTE'.

The LTTE are what may be described as a 'secessionist group' or indeed perhaps more commonly a 'separatist movement', which as the name would suggest, would be realised in attaining some variant or degree of separation from either an existing political union or unilateral governmental construct for the sake of independent governance (Wood 1981: 110). This was exactly the agenda of the LTTE, who of themselves declared that 'The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is the heart and soul of the Tamil struggle for self-determination'[25]. Of course further clarification is now necessary regarding just what the LTTE wishes to separate from so that they may accomplish independent governance.

Essentially the LTTE endeavoured to establish a state within the current geographical boundaries of Sri Lanka, which would be politically autonomous from existing parameters of Sri Lankan State control. However the fundamental characteristic of this state is that it would feature an intrinsic ethnic homogeneity with the leadership of this imagined 'Tamil Eelam' being ethnically Tamil, whilst the accompanying populace would be comprised exclusively of the sizeable Sri Lankan Tamil minority for the sole benefit of this demographic (Griffiths & Savić 2009: 340). Clearly though the appropriate ensuing query into the LTTE's desire for self-determination is for what reason(s) should they have even wished to pursue a separation from the existing governmental paradigm of Sri Lanka? The response it seems could serve for some as the justification behind designating the Sri Lanka Civil War as effectively instead an 'ethnonationalist' conflict, as opposed to plainly an 'ethnic' one. One could argue that the LTTE is at heart a reactionary movement, responding to an increase in discriminatory State policy which favoured Sri Lanka's

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[25] A quotation sourced from 'http://www.eelam.com/ltte', a pro-Tamil separatist website promoting the cause of the LTTE.

majority ethnic group, the Sinhala, to the detriment of the many other ethnicities with whom they share the island (Kingsbury 2012: 770). Being as they are the longstanding predominant ethnic presence in Sri Lanka, it would be wholly unsurprising to discover that politicians of Sinhala ethnicity have consistently dominated the governmental landscape of the island since regaining its control from the British in 1948 (Navaratna-Bandara 2000: 120). Whilst this may not necessarily be problematic in of itself, what was of concern is that the Sinhala political elite that have commanded the administration from the outset of the country's independence from British colonial rule, have since displayed a tendency towards what is sometimes considered a sub-variance of nationalist ideology and thus distinguishingly dubbed as 'ethnonationalism'.

Proponents of any aspiring nationalism seek to politically empower an exclusive aggregation of individuals, defined here as a 'nation', by prioritizing their interests and values above those external to this grouping, whilst also attempting to guarantee their autonomy (Breuilly 1993: 2). The critical importance of the latter within nationalist ideology is why derived movements are compelled to acquire the 'nation-state', whereby they strive towards adjusting the parameters of state infrastructure so as to provide hegemony and deference to this exclusive conglomeration (Harris 2009: 5). With regards to this ethnonationalist sub-variant of nationalism then, the nation-state in accordance with this ideological system should be pictured as being inflexibly representative of a specific ethnic identity. What may therefore justify ethnonationalism as being rightly considered a sub-type of nationalist movement is that whereas a generic nationalism may include within its national scope a multi-ethnic grouping of individuals, ethnonationalism uniquely ascribes nationhood

exclusively to a singular ethnic community (Cobban 1994: 248). Moreover, claims Cobban, nationalisms incorporating poly-ethnic solidarity have now become largely relegated to the medieval and early colonial past, supplanted instead by a prevailing mono-ethnocentric model (Cobban 1994: 250). Connor prefers however to argue conversely against any such assertion that the default stance of nationalism is devoid of an ethnic bias, stating that nations are typically the consequence of ethnic self-consciousness (Smith 2010: 57). Connor's thesis posits that as 'nation connotes a group of people who believe that they are ancestrally related' and that with nationalism denoting 'identification with and loyalty to one's nation as just defined', so an appreciation of mutual ethnic awakening is what forms the foundational substratum onto which nationalist ideology may affix itself (Connor 1994: xi).

Reinicke's observations of various nationalist movements that arose from the former Eastern Bloc support this, in that nationhood here was commonly conferred as a condition of common genealogy (Reinicke 1996: 299). According to Connor then, ethnonationalism is the indistinguishable essence of nationalism by virtue of nationhood being now characteristically conferred by nationalist movements upon ethnic sensibilities - a notion which seems to overtly imply somewhat of an abutting relationship between ethnic identity and contemporary trends of nationalist ideology. Engaging the concept of ethnonationalism on similar terms to Connor, Brass proposes that the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism can be largely developmental in that, whilst it should be clear that it is not inevitable that such is to occur, the amalgamating properties of ethnicity can provide ample foundation on which a national consciousness can arise and be maintained (Brass 1991: 23). Following the theory of Brass, nationalism then may be a result of social adhesion

structured around the concept of ethnic identity asserting itself politically within a wider social context for its own end. What Brass seems to be suggesting here is that it is the functionality of ethnicity as a tool of group unification that provides a mould in which nationalist ideology may readily become set. In contrast though to Connor or Reinicke for that matter, who both seem to imply that ethnic cohesion is determined upon ancestral ties, Brass seems to appreciate various cultural consistencies which also contribute to the formation of ethnic identity (Brass 1991: 19). This approach mediates that of Hobsbawm who refutes the 'genetic approach' of Connor and Reinicke by arguing that the 'crucial base' of ethnic identity is instead 'cultural rather than biological' (Hobsbawm 1990: 63).

In summary then, ethnonationalist ideology is in essence what motivated both factions of the Sri Lankan Civil War in their respective campaigns and/or policies. These competing ethnonationalisms emerged initially from the administrative installation of Sinhala ethnonationalism which would then later result in the rise of the LTTE's Tamil ethnonationalism in reaction against State policy informed by the former. As contemporary ethnonationalisms tend to conform to a mono-ethnocentric model, Sinhala ethnonationalism is conducive preponderantly to exalting Sri Lanka's ethnic Sinhala, seemingly at the expense of their compatriot ethnicities[26]. The LTTE's Tamil ethnonationalism offered an alternative representation of this exact paradigm, in how it instead elevated the rights and concerns of Tamil to a pre-

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[26] For as Guneratne explains, the crux of Sinhala ethnonationalism is the ascendancy of the Sinhala over minority ethnic communities due to a sense of exclusive territorial entitlement, corresponding to the landmass of Sri Lanka (Guneratne 2011: 82). Particulars of Sri Lankan State policy which have actualized the principles of Sinhala ethnonationalism are explored throughout the remainder of this chapter, whilst for now it would suffice to acknowledge that this entitlement essentially manifests itself in demands for unitary state parameters underneath Sinhala dominance according to the principles of '*eksath*' ('united') and '*ekeeya*' ('unitary') (Rāghavan 2015: 128), alongside an expectation of cultural homogeneity according to Sinhala norms (Seneviratne 2003: 155).

eminence above those of other ethnic communities. On the basis of either inclination, both Sinhala and Tamil ethnonationalists have attempted 'state formation projects' – albeit it in divergent fashions, with incommensurate degrees of success – in order to manipulate the state paradigm of contemporary Sri Lanka in ways which produced rival sovereignties (Uyangoda 2011: 37). Thus to refer to the Sri Lankan Civil War as simply an 'ethnic conflict' seems perhaps an over-simplification of its physiology. The escalation towards civil war in contemporary Sri Lanka could be more precisely described as a matter of politicised ethnicities engaging one another over questions of power distribution within the limits of an island's geographical boundaries. It is ultimately for this reason that I would suggest that in terms of providing an accurate classification of the Sri Lankan Civil War, such would better served by pronouncing it to be an 'ethnonationalist conflict' as opposed to just an 'ethnic conflict'.

3.1.2. The Presence of Religion within Sri Lanka's Competing Ethnonationalisms

Though one can somewhat easily understand the emergence of Tamil ethnonationalism as a defence against unfavourable political development, what is not yet clear is the motivation for the Sinhala ethnonationalism behind it. It has been established that the majority of Sri Lankan Tamils are Hindu, and it is for that reason that the LTTE is comprised of individual members who are almost entirely united in their adherence to Hinduism (Roy 2004: 43). The LTTE should not be confused due to their distinctly Hindu composition as being an explicitly religiously motivated

separatist movement (Hopgood 2006: 76). Scholars frequently refer to the LTTE as being a 'secular' nationalist movement (Moghadam 2008: 55), and as Schalk notes, the LTTE adamantly defends its portrayal as a 'secular' organization on the grounds that it sought to unite and represent Tamils of all religious affiliations in the pursuit of Tamil Eelam (Schalk 2003: 393), as their definition of Tamil ethnicity was rather flexible insomuch as religion was concerned for it included Muslim and Christian minorities alongside the Hindu majority (Derges 2012: 72).With regards though to the Sinhalese nationalist ideologies that have provided the momentum behind these inflammatory policies which seem to have provoked the LTTE resistance, there is however a distinctly religious undertone within their formulation. Sinhala ethnonationalism seems almost interchangeably used alongside Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism; the implication here being that the popular political ideology inspiring the Sri Lanka government since obtaining independence, which whilst being clearly catalytic in the conception of the Sri Lankan Civil War, was also influenced to at least a certain extent by the religious tradition commonly associated with Sinhalese ethnicity.

Sabaratnam elaborates on the impact that Buddhism had upon nationalist politics in Sri Lanka by exploring the rise of what he dubs as 'conviction politics' following the 'Protestant Buddhist' revival of the late nineteenth century. Such was characterized by the move to restore to prominence the island's Buddhist heritage principally by reforming socio-political practice in correspondence with Buddhist ethical principles (Sabaratnam 2001: 161). It seems then that there was a stirring discomfort amongst Sri Lankan Buddhists that their homeland in terms of socio-political conditions was somewhat antithetical to values of Buddhism. Thus what emerged from this

reinvigorated Buddhism was a spate of political activism that sought to reassert Buddhist values as the norm in Sri Lanka. The seminal advocates of Buddhist conviction politics claimed that the present colonial leadership was not Buddhist and therefore susceptible to immoral conduct; a sentiment popularised by the likes of Anagarika Dharmapala, a leading personality of 'Protestant Buddhism'[27] and figurehead of Buddhist conviction politics, who frequently made reference to the alleged immorality of the British administration (Seneviratne 1999: 30). However there was also an undeniable air of fear surrounding the development of conviction politics, as suggested by the notion that as Buddhism no longer enjoyed state patronage as it had done for a great deal of its legacy in Sri Lanka, and with a proficient Christian missionary presence in the island which governmental favour, the continuity of Buddhism was perceived as being under threat of diminishment (DeVotta 2004: 27).

The paranoia of relegating power to Christianity and the relative impotence resulting from a lack of State support appears just as much the impetus for the rise of Buddhist conviction politics, as was the desire for re-entrenching Buddhist standards of practice regarding politics and social conduct. Quite clearly in support of this were the actions of the 'All Ceylon Buddhist Congress', a lay-led religious organisation established in 1951 as a means to lobby the Sri Lankan Government in the interests of Buddhist conviction politics. The efforts of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress would prove fruitful with the acquisition of State benefaction and protection of Buddhism, providing countermeasures primed in opposition to the growth of Christianity in the

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[27] The term coined by Gananath Obeyesekere to describe the modernist Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka, which both references its nature as an anti-establishment protest movement, whilst also acknowledging the influence of Protestant Christianity upon its formation (LeVine & Gellner 2005: 18).

island (Sabratnam 2001: 161-162). Thus whilst Buddhist conviction politics arose in the twilight years of the colonial period, it endured into the later period of Sri Lanka's independence, suggesting therefore that even though successive independent governments of Sri Lanka were dominated by professed adherents of Buddhism, such individuals were not perceived by some advocates of Buddhist conviction politics to be emphatically pursuing the establishment of a fundamentally Buddhist Sri Lanka, otherwise there would be no need for the activism of groups like the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. Yet now that it has been established as to why Buddhists in modern Sri Lanka became politically engaged, how is it then that this Buddhist socio-political concern became enmeshed with Sinhala ethnonationalism? Consider how Yinger remarks 'there is a close and, I think it is fair to say, natural affinity between ethnicity and religion', where he draws and elaborates upon the sociological framework proposed originally by Durkheim (Yinger 1994: 255-258).

Right though Yinger seems in noting that Durkheim did not address specifically the question of ethnic identity and its relationship to religion, he nevertheless paved the way for others such as Yinger who may now utilize Durkheim's conclusive observations regarding religion's essential function in society as a blueprint for debating how religion relates to ethnicity. Durkheim's renowned study of indigenous Australians yielded a fascinating account of the functionality of religion, being namely that which acts as a social adhesive in binding human social groups into so-called 'moral communities' (Llobera 1994: 136). What the transformation from base human collectives to moral communities achieves is essentially the optimum condition for mutual individual survival, which is obviously attained through the solidity of group cooperation. Just how a religion engineers this via the means of producing moral

communities is the way by which order is not only established through enforcing norms of behaviour and conduct, but that that which is held sacred by the group – be it contextually gods or spirits, which in all cases are identified by Durkheim as evolved variants of primeval 'totems' – is essentially a symbolic expression of the group itself. The Durkheimian perspective of the sacred in religion then suggests it is in essence an abstract projection of the human social group (Parkin 1992: 47). Thus by sanctifying the totem, which occurs both in the theoretical principle of doctrine or dogma and repeatedly in practice by performing worship, one is constantly reaffirming the value of the ordered human collective insomuch as it offers the greatest chance of survival. It is this theory proposed by Durkheim on the function of religion within society which informs Yinger's understanding of how religion operates within the confines of ethnicity, and once understanding of Durkheim's functionality theory is acquired it thus seems clear how it may retain relevance whilst being reapplied to specifically ethnic arrangements of human society.

Ethnicity is at its most fundamental strata a unit of human social grouping, and as such can therefore be readily subjected to Durkheimian sociological analysis on the basis that it is therefore for all intents and purposes a 'society'. Ethnic groups then, as a form of human collective, are according to Durkheimian principle to induce religious allegiance amongst its constituents precisely for the sake of ensuring the endurance of this communal bond. Religion ergo develops from ethnic attachment. Similar to this Durkheimian model, the work of Brass outlines religion as a typically central facet of ethnic identity; yet in subtle discrepancy to the Durkheimian leanings of Yinger, he seems to portray religion as an internalised binding aspect of ethnicity, rather than essentially being an externalised instrument of reinforcing communal

formation. For Brass, ethnic attachments develop on certain primary bio-cultural conditions which may or may not be inclusive of shared religious norms (Brass 1991: 19); whilst according to Durkheimian theory, common religiosity develops as a consequence of ethnic attachments forming among individuals. Note also that according to an objective cultural markers perspective, ethnic identity can be devoid of religious affiliation, whereas the Durkheimian stance would seem to disagree, stating instead that religion is a natural extension of ethnic attachment necessary for the cohesion and continuity of the group. Accordingly a further contrast here is the disparity in how ethnicity is principally defined. The 'objective cultural markers' approach detailed by Brass seems to perceive religious commonality as being amongst the catalytic ingredients which are to be present for ethnic attachment to occur. On the other hand, Durkheimian theory professes that the conditions of group attachment which merit specific designation as 'ethnic', are devoid of interpersonal religious consistency within the group in how it suggests that the development of religiosity instead results from the very process that is the formation of ethnic attachments.

A Durkheimian perspective therefore appears to assume that in a sense ethnicity precedes religion, and as such a definition of ethnicity drawn upon Durkheimian lines is one which differs somewhat to that which is offered by the objective cultural markers approach. Yinger seems to pose a solution to the question of defining an accurate Durkheimian perspective of ethnicity in equating the concept of ethnic identities with Durkheim's hypothesis concerning the default human societal structure, citing an excerpt from Durkheim's acclaimed work '*The Elementary Forms

of the Religious Life' as sufficient support[28] (Yinger 1994: 257-258). From this portion of the text it is evidently possible to synchronise the concept of ethnic identity with these stated conditions required for fundamental human group cohesion, as the noted features of common biological and/or cultural legacies among individuals which lead to rudimentary social establishments are, as this research has earlier argued, the combining factors converging within the circumference of ethnicity. In fact it was the objective cultural markers approach presented by Brass which would define ethnic identity by trends amongst structured groups of individuals involving such biological and cultural elements as are identified by Durkheim as foundational societal building-blocks. Despite then any demarcation in determining whether religion occupies either a primary or secondary position within the development of ethnic identities in either the objective cultural markers approach or that of Durkheimian sociological theory respectively, both perspectives nevertheless offer the same ultimate ruling on the relationship between ethnicity and religion – namely, that ethnicity has a natural affinity to play host to religion.

The proponents of Buddhist conviction politics were typically Sinhala, for this ethnic group had witnessed rapid and widespread conversion to Buddhism from 250 BCE following the arrival of missionaries from India (Gombrich 1988: 137). The politically active Buddhists of Sri Lanka therefore perceived Sinhala identity to be intrinsically linked to the Buddhist faith due to this traditional association, which had become galvanized by the authoring of a Sinhala mytho-historical record that depicted this ethnic group as the custodians of the authentic Buddhist tradition (Neumaier 2004:

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[28] Being specifically the following: 'Everything brings us back, then, to the same idea. First and foremost, the rites are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically....Men who feel united – in part by ties of blood but even more by common interests and traditions – assemble and become conscious of their moral unity' (Durkheim tranls. Fields 1995: 390)

78). This '*Mahavamsa*', meaning 'The Great Chronicle', seemed to overtly bestow rightful 'ownership' of Sri Lanka upon the Sinhala, interestingly on the premise that they have been divinely charged with preserving this landmass as a sanctuary for Buddhist practice (Bartholomeusz 2002: 142). Hence what emerged in Sri Lanka was a religiously sanctioned Sinhala ethnonationalism, as the proponents of Buddhist conviction politics came to imagine a Sinhala dominated state, for within this Buddhism would be able to gain stability and thereafter flourish. In contrast then to the LTTE, the opposing combatants in the conflict representing the post-independent governments of Sri Lanka were clearly to an extent impressed upon directly by the input of Buddhist religious leaders and associated community organisations. Thus whilst the Sri Lankan Civil War is undeniably a fundamentally ethnonationalist conflict, religion – or to be more specific, Buddhism - was yet instrumental in its conception as it promoted and reinforced an ideology which translated into antagonistic political policies, provoking a militant Tamil separatist reaction.

3.2. Beyond Civil War: Sri Lankan Society's Greater Ailment

'*Trace a modern conflict to its source, and there lies the British Empire*' – Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban[29]

3.2.1. The Basis of a Two-Fold Conflict Dynamic

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[29] Quoted from Eliza Griswold's *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Faultline Between Islam and Christianity* (Griswold 2010: 98).

Reflecting on the previous section of this chapter, it would now seem appropriate to reframe what exactly is included within the concept of 'conflict' as it is contextually understood herein. So far this research has defined the conflict in question primarily as a period of warfare between the separatist LTTE and the established government of Sri Lanka. However I would argue that a subtler form of conflict that pre-dates the LTTE insurgency and continues whereas the former has all but entirely come to cessation. As such there appears somewhat of a dual-layered conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka being comprised of *ethnonationalist conflict* in terms of the when Civil War was present, as well as that of the precursory and still extant *ethnic conflict*. Regarding the relationship of the two then, the ethnonationalist conflict owing to the Tamil insurrection is in a sense merely a pronounced symptom of a deeper ailment which has steadily engrained itself within Sri Lankan society since the latter colonial period, being identified and termed here as ethnic conflict. The dynamics of this particular instance of ethnic conflict began with the way in which Sri Lankan society had become fractured along largely ethnic lines due it seems to the factors of socially destructive European racialist influence accompanying divisive British bureaucratic methods. During the British rule of Sri Lanka the academic popularity of European racialism stemming from the conception of an 'Aryan race', by way of its alleged descent from Sanskrit, elevated the Sinhala tongue and thus its speakers to a kin-like association with the notion of a superior Indo-European racial group (Tambiah 1992: 131). Superior that is, to the non-Aryan Tamils and their native dialect that were to be relegated to a contrasting and unduly inferior 'Dravidian' status.

Yet supplementing this European racialist theory in disintegrating Sri Lankan social unity, it would appear that prior to the circulation of racialist writings amongst Sinhala literati in the late nineteenth century, the many years previous of British colonisation beginning from 1796 had introduced to the island an administrative procedure unique to British bureaucratic governance. This characteristic feature peculiar to British colonial rule in Sri Lanka was an officially conducted racial profiling and classification system, as was similarly employed throughout the British Raj in neighbouring India. According to this system, the British colonial administration acknowledged certain distinctions amongst Sri Lanka civility which they articulated as 'racial', and in doing so opted to govern the Sri Lankan populace compartmentally according to designated ethnic categories such as 'Tamil', 'Sinhalese', 'Moor' and 'Burgher' (Peebles 2006: 48). The resultant ramification, argues Berkwitz, was that such a system 'fostered a modern ethnic consciousness and the rise of identity politics among the island's residents' (Berkwitz 2008: 202). McGilvray terms this a 'divide-and-rule' stratagem, which ushered in a 'system of inequitable rewards between the Tamils and the Sinhalese' (McGilvray 2008: 4) which would grant preference to Tamils (Wimmer 2002: 95). It is from these colonial tears in social harmony that the Sri Lankan Civil War ultimately arose, as this epitome of a Sinhala-Tamil split in Sri Lanka can be causally derived from an ethnonationalist ideology which was itself directly born of theses aforementioned divergent socio-political conditions. The Sinhala ethnonationalist policies of post-independent Governments in Sri Lanka which appeared to discriminate against Tamils were purportedly justified by proponents in that such were designed to reverse this ingrained advantage by providing opportunities for Sinhala to improve their socio-economic status (Wilson 2000: 192).

Paradoxically, whilst exalted with recognition as being of Aryan stock, the British administration's system of racial classification and stereotyping unfairly branded the Sinhala as 'lazy' (Peebles 2006: 59), thereby depressing their general socio-economic conditions by denying fair access to both professional and clerical positions (Gibney & Hansen: 587) as well as within manual labour markets (Kanapathipillai 1995: 326). Several post-independence policies implemented by the Sinhala ethnonationalistic polity appear to directly redress this, although Sri Lanka Tamils would generally reject these as nothing other than vindictive discrimination and expressions of ethnic dominance (de Varennes 2010: 463). The 1971 Policy of Standardization for one entailed that Tamils required appreciably higher entry examination marks than their Sinhala counterparts to qualify for university admission in the areas of medicine, engineering and the sciences (Krishna 1999: 76). The obvious effect of such was that the proportionate Tamil occupation of professional roles was considerably reduced in favour of Sinhala graduates (Ahmed 1996: 253). The earlier Sinhala Only Act of 1956 replaced English with Sinhala as the sole official language of Sri Lanka was equally as compounding (Coperahewa 2013: 229). As a consequence of this, many existing Tamil civil servants, who being Tamil spoke primarily their indigenous tongue and secondarily English due to the demands of their employment heretofore, lacked competent fluency in Sinhala and so were forced to resign (Tambiah 1986: 62). In terms of 'blue-collar' opportunity, the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 effectively rendered 'Indian Tamil'[30] agrarian workers stateless, which would ultimately hamper their prospects for continued or further

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[30] A term used to distinguish those Tamil labourers who arrived from Southern India under the British colonization, as opposed to the 'Ceylon Tamils' who have been an ingrained presence in Sri Lanka since migrating from the Indian subcontinent at various points long before any European colonization (Björkman 1996: 328).

employment in Sri Lanka by granting a succinct advantage to Sinhala peasantry (Kanapathipillai 2009: 43 & 97)[31].

3.2.2. Further Aspects of Ethnic Conflict I: The Sinhala and Sri Lanka's Muslim Ethnicities

Other ethnic groups which aroused the contempt of Sinhala populists prior to the Civil War were the Sri Lankan Moors. The legacy of Arab trade in South Asia has touched upon Sri Lankan history in the respect that, much like the Mappila of India, there exists a present-day Islamic community that is descended from Arab merchants who decided to settle in Sri Lanka following mercantile excursions to the island that began sometime during the seventh century CE (Mohan 1985: 4). 'Moors' as these Arab expatriates came to be known, originally congregated in coastal trade-colonies that became an enduring blueprint for the social identity of the group, as the legacy of Sri Lankan human geography suggests that they chose to customarily maintain this distribution pattern by preserving their coastal community setting for the sake of maintaining their hereditary commercial profession that the nearby ports would obviously allow (Imtiyaz & Iqbal 2011: 376). It is these Sri Lankan Moors which are not only the oldest constituent of the island's Islamic community, but are also the ethnic identity that forms the greater proportion of all the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka which predominately align themselves with Islamic belief. Hence it seems that for the above reason, the term 'Muslim' is often used within Sri Lanka as much to

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[31] And thus the Sinhala frustration generated by this socio-economic marginalization was instead transposed onto privileged ethnic minority groups rather than the antagonistic colonial administration itself (Fernando 2013: 173).

specifically refer to the Moors as an ethnic community, as it is to refer generally to an adherent of Islam in absence of ethnic distinctions. However for clarity, I employ the terms 'Sri Lankan Muslims' or 'Muslims of Sri Lanka' not exclusively to Sri Lanka Moors, but instead in reference to the general adherent of Islam in Sri Lanka inclusive of all ethnic identities that may profess its system of belief.

Alongside the Sri Lankan Moors in second position within the island's Islamic community in terms of its prominence as an ethnicity, are the Sri Lankan Malays. The Malays are like most other forms of Islamic ethnicities in Sri Lanka in that their presence is largely a by-product of colonialism. However the term 'Malay' is a rather misleading suggestion of their origins, for it refers to a Sri Lankan ethnic community which represents the mixed descendants of migrants from various Indonesian islands, whilst virtually none of their ancestors arrived from the Malaysian Peninsula (Nordhoff 2013: 3). Nordhoff explains that it was the British who provided the Sri Lankan Malays with this misnomer, after realizing these otherwise distinct peoples communicated to one another in a variety of Malay as a *lingua franca* (Nordhoff 2013: 3). The present Malay community traces its ancestry to the arrivals escorted to Sri Lanka from a military base in Jakarta by the Dutch during the colonial period, and as such the religious tradition practised by these original migrants constituted what was to become the cultural norm for successive generations of Malays born in Sri Lanka. Much of the populations of both Malaysia and in particular Indonesia prior to European colonisation had become converted to Islam following commercial contact with Muslim Arabs (Pringle 2010: 23). As such, at the time of the Dutch colonisation of these areas, the populace confronting their new enforced European masters would have been almost unanimously Muslim. Hence those that the Dutch migrated

to Sri Lanka as predominantly soldiers, but also political exiles, convicts and slaves, carried with them the Islamic religious practices of their homeland (Mahroof 2011: 453).

The fact that Sri Lankan Malays only constitute approximately 4% of the total Muslim population now present in Sri Lanka (Ameerdeen 2006: 23) really puts into perspective the exiguity of Sri Lanka's other yet unstated Muslim ethnicities who are much smaller communities than are the Malays, whilst at the same time fully illustrating the sheer magnitude of the Moor presence within Sri Lankan Islam. Saldin reveals that the British too increased the volume of Sri Lankan Muslims by allowing for the further migration of Malays, following the preceding period of Malay relocation to the island whilst it remained under Dutch rule (Saldin 2012). Alongside supplementing the Sri Lankan Muslim community as a whole, the British were also responsible for diversifying it to even greater extent; not simply by just allowing for the introduction of additional ethnic identities that also claimed Islam as their religious affiliation, but also by expanding the denominational landscape of Islam in Sri Lanka to incorporate a Shi'a minority amongst the traditional Sunni majority. Sri Lanka's British colonists reversed certain social and economic impositions and restrictions that the Dutch had levied upon Muslims in that they reopened indiscriminate mercantile opportunities for the community, who in return seemed rather supportive of the new colonial arrangements (de Munck 1998: 114). In fact the certain freedoms and potential profiteering of British Sri Lanka's economic policy provided an incentive to not just the Moors whose own interest in commercial business ventures had been suppressed for the past few centuries, but also to other Muslim identities hailing from elsewhere beyond the borders of Sri Lanka, yet

nevertheless were still residents of related South Asian colonial territories united under British rule.

Of those latter Muslim communities stated above, Memons, Bohras and Khojas took advantage of the relocation opportunities presented under British colonial conquest of Sri Lanka, through which they could further their engagement in commerce. Originating from Pakistan and the states of northern India, Memons, Bohras and Khojas arrived in Sri Lanka with identical entrepreneurial intentions, yet in terms of Islamic practice and theology, a great divergence was present between the Sunni Islam of the Memons, and the Bohras' and Khojas' adherence to Shi'ism (McGilvray 2008: 371). It is this differentiation that marks out the Bohras and Khojas from all other Muslim groups in Sri Lanka, who like the Memons, profess allegiance to the Sunni rendering of the Islamic tradition. By contemporary measurements, it seems that the entirety of Sri Lankan Memons, Bohras and Khojas number only in the lower thousands, making up collectively less than 3% of the island's Muslim community (Department of Census & Statistics, Sri Lanka 2011). Thus it is apparent, despite the many Islamic ethnicities present in Sri Lanka, just how sizeable the presence of Sri Moors is within the sphere of Sri Lankan Islam. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Moors came to be frequently alternatively referred to as 'Sri Lankan Muslims', as not only were they the original Islamic group on the island, but also due to their massive majority amidst Sri Lankan Muslim ethnicities in relation to all others which themselves are diminutive minorities within an already small minority, a given Sri Lankan Muslim is decidedly likely to be a Moor, hence an association is formed.

Ultimately then, Sri Lankan Moors seem to have become the 'face' for Sri Lankan Islam as a whole, as is evident in prevailing Sinhala ethnonationalist perspectives which appears to associate features particular to the Moorish community construct as being standard aspects of the Islamic community in Sri Lanka (de Munck 1998: 115). Though as discussed above, not all Muslims who had settled in the island did so as traders, but that the mercantile Islamic archetype is clearly sourced within Sri Lankan Moorish heritage which has since their arrival in the island grounded the external perception of Islamic individuals being linked with commercial trade (Ali 2010: 190). Such a stereotype later became re-saturated with additional Islamic ethnicities arriving in Sri Lanka during colonial times that were intent on taking advantage of fresh business opportunities. Very little though seems to have been written regarding Sinhala ethnonationalist perspectives of Malays, Bohras, Khojas or Memons, though the work of Vajracharya concerning Sri Lankan Malays seems to imply that it is perhaps purely a case of ignorance on the part of non-Islamic majority ethnic identities. There is no doubt that the Islamic presence in Sri Lanka is overcast by the shadow of the Moor community, and with such being the case Vajracharya observes that Sri Lankan Malays for one are often ignorantly confused as being Moors on the basis that they practise the same religion as this otherwise very distinct community (Vajracharya 2010: 12).

The relative flourishing of Muslim, and in particular Moor, mercantile endeavours in Sri Lanka would earn the scorn within the modern Sinhala ethnic consciousness, as Muslims became depicted as avaricious and predatory exploiters victimizing the Sinhala community. The following quotation which was originally authored by Anagarika Dharmapala, a seminal figure within modern Sinhala ethnic politics, is

demonstrative of this characterization: 'The Mohammedans, an alien people...by Shylockian methods became prosperous like Jews....The alien South Indian Mohammedan comes to Ceylon, sees the neglected villager without any experience in trade...and the result is that Mohammedan thrives and the son of the soil (meaning the Sinhala) goes to the wall' (de Munck 1998: 115). What is displayed here is a perspective consistent with the 'Middleman Minority' theory of ethnic conflict, which involves the persecution of ethnic minorities based on a perceived economic imbalances resulting from supposedly unfair commercial advantages that favour them over the ethnic majority constituting the bulwark of the 'host society'. Horowitz details Middleman Minority theory at great depth in *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, even citing European Jews as exemplifying the theory. Whilst general business rivalries are in themselves arguably a soft form of conflict, Middleman Minority theory states that what can be particularly provocative about ethnic minority business ventures is that the typical structure of said enterprises includes features such as notably the acquisition of cheap familial labour, which subsequently imposes limits within the labour market for members of the host society external to this ethnic community (Horowitz 2000: 107).

However what Anagarika Dharmapala's specific grievance seems to be with regards to Sri Lankan Moors is not an alleged resultant depression within the Sinhala labour force, but instead it seems he is relaying an accusation of exploitation towards the community's merchants of whom there are many. Horowitz comments that the theme of foreign merchants settling and thereafter exploiting naive native peasantry purely for the sake of greed is indeed a persistent one within cases of Middleman Minority analyses of conflict motivation; however, he also argues that the truth is rarely on a

par with the accusations (Horowitz 2000: 117). Essentially then what is typically formed following the settlement of a proficient foreign trading enterprise within a host society context is one of welcome, due to certain benefits which may be extremely advantageous to the peasantry of the host society. Hence it is already at a first glance unlikely that an exploitative relationship would have been in operation between Sri Lanka's Moors and the Sinhala, but also taking into account the source of these allegations, one cannot help but recall how Gunawardana has observed that propagators of Sinhala ethnonationalism are prone to reinventing and/or distorting Sri Lankan history for the sake of consolidating their own agenda and perspectives (Gunawardana 1995: 26). Following extensive research into the historical legacy of the relationship between the Sri Lankan Moors and the Sinhala kingdom via less potentially biased sources, it is apparent that both Horowitz's and Gunawardana's insight highlighted above are indeed applicable with regards to Anagarika Dharmapala's distinctly belligerent portrayal.

The reality of what occurred when Arab Muslim traders landed upon the shores of Sri Lanka was the formation of an enduring and wholly reciprocally beneficial relationship between the Moors and the Sinhala kingdom. Despite such later negative trends permeating Sinhala populist attitudes towards Sri Lanka's Moor community, it seems that prior to this the Sinhalese political elite were very much enthusiastic for these Arab merchants to remain and become enmeshed within the socio-economic structure of the island. As Dewaraja explains, this was primarily due to the financial implications favouring the state should they be content playing host to a highly professional and affluent trading enterprise; the Arabs were in a sense a Sinhala investment, allowed to dwell in their territory with relative autonomy and

without fear of persecution, in order that they may repay such 'generosity' with taxable revenue (Dewaraja 1994: 4). Note also that the Moors provided the Sinhala monarchy with invaluable networking and surveillance opportunities based around their commercial contacts abroad, an asset that landed the Moors an advisory role within Sri Lanka's royal courts (Dewaraja 1994: 8).The real breach then in the relationship between Sri Lankan Muslim and Sinhala communities seems to have occurred within a purely modern context as ethnonationalism began to unfurl within Sinhala popular consciousness, which at least in part conformed to the Middleman Minority aspect of Horowitz's economic theory of ethnic conflict as it began to persecute this trading minority upon a terribly disfigured opinion of the past.

3.2.3. Further Aspects of Ethnic Conflict II: Tamils and Moors

The historical modern relationship between Tamils and Islamic ethnicities in Sri Lanka has also been one of disintegration of a largely amicable past. Turn of the twentieth century Tamil nationalists led by Ponnambalam Ramanathan, in an endeavour to bolster support against the formidable competition of Sinhala ethnonationalists, sought to argue that the Moors shared a common cultural heritage with Tamils in that the Moors were ethnically Tamil, though Tamils which had forsaken their traditional Hindu practice for conversion to Islam (Yusoff et al 2014: 201). Of course there were Tamils in Sri Lanka and their ancestral homeland of Tamil Nadu that were also practising Muslims[32], though such individuals should not be identified as being culturally identical to the Sri Lankan Moors; an opinion that

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[32] Who in Sri Lanka, Mohan notes, are often descendants of converts from Hinduism to Islam resulting from contact with the nation's Moor community (Mohan 1985: 7).

was passionately shared by the Moors themselves, who began organising themselves as a community against what they perceived to be a trespassing upon their independent identity. The Moors' backlash against these efforts to conjoin Tamil-Moor identities resulted in an overtly reactionary 're-Arabisation' of the Moorish cultural norms, whereby they began adopting more Arabic customs in order to highlight their identification with a non-Dravidian Arabian ethnic heritage (de Munck 1998: 115). Whilst clearly this does not mirror exactly the modern Sinhala-Muslim contention as just described, it seems nevertheless a further expression of ethnic conflict for not only were Moors aggrieved at these attempts, but many Tamils have been left 'embittered' by this sustained rejection of ethno-political union (McGilvray 2011: 52).

Though in striving so diligently to distinguish themselves as an autonomous community from the island's Tamils, Sri Lankan Moors had essentially exposed themselves to utter isolation from the both major political competitors in the island, and in doing so, ran the terrible risk of becoming a collateral casualty in the war about to ravage contemporary Sri Lanka between two sides who seem to care little for the concerns of 'outsiders' that they are argued to be. Muslim minorities had no claim to Tamil Eelam, nor were they the model citizens of an imagined Sinhala-Buddhist state. Whilst the LTTE were in a certain respect disconnected from early twentieth century Tamil politicians, being members of the Tamil community which were once represented by these figures entails that they have inherited the fruits of their political discourse, which with regards to their perceptions of Sri Lankan Moors, assures that this community was seen as external or even contrary to the Tamil equivalent. Evidence of LTTE activity towards Sri Lanka's Moors, such as massacres

and the serial eviction of Moor residents from seized territories, validates this assertion by demonstrating how the movement considered Sri Lankan Muslims to be estranged from Tamil identity to the extent that they were designated among the community's adversaries (Aliff 2012: 255). Post-civil war scholarship claims there to be a lingering schism between Tamil and Moors on the basis of LTTE atrocities yet to be apologized for and the current occupation of former Muslim property by Tamils in zones previously under LTTE occupation (Rauff & Hatta 2013: 227). McGilvray identifies Northeastern areas of Sri Lanka as the epicentre of these tensions, where Tamil ethnocentrism still inhibits much inter-ethnic cooperation (McGilvray 2011: 53).

3.2.4. Further Aspects of Ethnic Conflict III: Sinhala Buddhists and Christians - An Intra-Ethnic Dimension

Stirrat states that there has been a prominent trend with the contemporary Sinhala community to discount those of anything other than Buddhist in terms of their religiosity as being somewhat lacking in their grasp of 'Sinhala-ness' (Stirrat 1998: 153). What we have then in Sri Lanka in terms of ethnic conflict does not just resemble an inter-ethnic model, but also one that features a simultaneous intra-ethnic dimension within the island's Sinhala community. Sinhala adherents of religions other than Buddhist are therefore risking the scorn of their ethnic kin through this disassociation from Buddhism. Thus when one speaks of 'ethnic' conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka, one should be aware that impacted within this concept is a subtle twofold division between inter and intra-ethnic dimension of such conflict. This intra-ethnic conflict is characteristic of the Sinhala ethnic community, where

religious diversity can be interpreted as problematic, particularly where Christianity is concerned. Why such a particular dichotomy exists within the Sinhala community is primarily due to this overarching notion that Buddhism ought to be the proper religious association which complements Sinhala ethnicity; however, Christianity notably suffers from an association to antagonistic 'Other' in the eyes of popular Sinhala perspectives – that of past European colonisers (Bartholomeusz 1998: 140). Note that historically there have been instances of Sinhala conversion to the non-Buddhist religion of Islam (Arasaratnam 1958: 220), although in comparison to Christianity this would appear to have occurred far less frequently for even recently confirmed Sinhala Buddhist conversions to Islam have been described as 'rare' (BBC News 2010). As will be explained below, this divergence between Christianity and Islam in terms of acquiring Sinhala converts can be attested to the former as having enjoyed lengthy periods of political substantiation under colonialism.

Rasiah observes that one's religious persuasion in Sri Lanka is often defined by ethnic identity – for example Tamils are majority Hindu, whereas the Sinhalese are normatively Buddhist. He also notes that Christianity in Sri Lanka transcends ethnic distinctions, in that its adherents can be sourced from both the Tamil and Sinhala communities (Rasiah 2011: 57). Jacobsen also identifies like Rasiah the unique nature of Sri Lankan Christianity in that it harmonises two often polarised ethnic identities in the island under a single universal religious identity. Strictly speaking, at least according to Jacobsen, a greater percentage of Tamils are Christian than are their Sinhala counterparts (being at 33% and 5% respectively) though in terms of numbers this equates to almost equivalent figures of individuals (with Tamil Christians being numbered at 700,000 and Sinhalese Christians totalling near

800,000), and when totalled 80% of which profess specific denominational allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church (Jacobsen 2011: 116). As such, Roman Catholicism is evidently the largest of all Christian denominations present within Sri Lanka. It would seems also that Catholic manifestation is clearly the oldest amongst the current roster of Christian Churches in Sri Lanka, owing its inception to the first wave of contact with European colonisation stemming from the fifteenth century CE Portuguese commercial expeditionary forays into South Asia (Schrikker 2007: 19). The remaining 20% of Sri Lankan Christians then belong to the variant forms of Protestantism that arrived in the island in the two successive waves of European colonialism following the Portuguese period, the first of which being the Dutch, who were then later succeeded by the British.

After liberating the island from the oppressive Portuguese control by militaristic means, the Dutch encouraged the reception of their nationally patronised religious tradition - the Dutch Reformed Church - within the boundaries of their newfound Sri Lankan territories. Contrastingly to the Calvinist theology of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Protestant Churches carried forth from the United Kingdom to Sri Lanka once it became transferred to British jurisdiction included Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists (Harris 2006: 40). Yet despite the alternative theologies that would otherwise estrange such groups from one another, the Christian institutions hurried into Sri Lanka during the colonial period were united upon one primary objective: evangelism of the island's inhabitants (Berkwitz 2008: 201). The Portuguese colonists emphatically pursued evangelism, and this they approached with militant zeal. Alongside incessant preaching amongst the native populace, the Portuguese went as far as to actually destroy Buddhist and Hindu temple complexes (Berkwitz

2008: 202), as well as confiscating monastic property in order to replace its Buddhist occupants with their own religious orders of which there was becoming an increasing number (Rasiah 2011: 46). The Portuguese approach to acquiring Christian converts in Sri Lanka was as successful as it was brutal, claiming somewhere between 100,000 and 150,000 Catholics in Sri Lanka by 1658 (Rasiah 2011: 47). Portuguese legislation would later entail that Catholic converts were awarded a number of social and personal benefits in contrast to their neighbours who opted to remain faithful to Buddhism in the form of tax relief and desirable employment, to the extent that Buddhists were prevented entirely from taking advantage of the lucrative employment under the colonial administration on the basis of their religious identity (Chandralal 2003: 13)

Once a year had passed from the defeat of the Portuguese and the re-colonization of Sri Lanka by the Dutch forces of the '*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC)' in 1658, a transition occurred in the infrastructure of Dutch 'Zeylon' transforming its administrative model from that of a military garrison to a true civil authority, replete with codified laws and governmental institutions reflecting their home environ. Naturally then the Dutch encouraged the reception of their nationally patronised religious tradition, the Dutch Reformed Church, within the boundaries of their Sri Lankan territories, as these were essentially just an extension of existing Dutch lands and so would at least attempt some form of cultural uniformity. Despite the fact that Jean Maetsuijcker, a prominent associate of the VOC enclave in Sri Lanka, is noted by Goonewardena as proclaiming that 'it was not the custom of the Dutch to coerce anyone in matters of religion' (Goonewardena 1958: 99), the Dutch legacy in the island provides an account quite to the contrary. Boudens cites a passage from the

VOC's Batavian Code, which is defined by Ruangsilp as a 'projection of Dutch law on its territories and subjects in Asia (Ruangsilp 2007: 38), that states 'no other religion will be exercised, much less taught or propagated, either secretly or publicly, than the Reformed Christian Religion as it is taught in the public Churches of the Netherlands', including an accompanying acknowledgement that defiance of this law could amount to the most severe criminal chastisement (Boudens 1957: 73). Whereas the Portuguese were militantly opaque on their policies regarding religious plurality that incorporates the non-Christian religions of Sri Lanka, the Dutch adopted a much subtler approach to oppression, primarily via the means of imposing social sanctions such as restricted employment opportunities for non-members of the Reformed Church (Arasaratnam 1958: 220).

Following the finalising of the mainly Anglo-Franc Treaty of Amiens in 1802 which nevertheless included territorial negotiations between the Dutch and British, Sri Lanka's coastal fringe which had been held under the EIC since 1796 became officially absorbed into the margins of British colonisation (James 2011: 153). Like their Dutch predecessors, the new British colonial oversight in Sri Lanka became a gateway through which yet more Christianities could filter into South Asia with the intention of converting the masses yet to embrace their version of the faith. However contrastingly a marked difference appears in the manner in which British colonial authorities positioned themselves regarding their relationship to proselytization in comparison to that of their predecessors. It is clear that both the former Portuguese and Dutch rulers of the island were very much keen to engineer socio-political arrangements in Sri Lanka to the benefit of their respective nationally affiliated religious tradition. The British occupiers of Sri Lanka it is argued however, were not

concerned with enforcing a religious monopoly upon the island's occupants; rather their contented dispassion towards patterns of religiosity in the island has earned them the honorific recognition from one scholar as being mildly 'tolerant' of Sri Lanka's non-Christian religions (Rasiah 2011: 46). However the work of other scholars suggests that not all of Sri Lanka's resident British evangelists were so acquiescent regarding matters of religion. Mendis declares that certain British officials in colonial Sri Lanka did also in fact seek to elevate their own brand of Protestant Christianity to a status superior to that of the other faiths present on the island, which included employment sanctions against non-Anglo-Protestants that were reminiscent of the discriminatory policies of both the former Portuguese and Dutch regimes (Mendis 1946: 30).

In fact Peebles too identifies in conjunction with Mendis that the British administration in Sri Lanka overwhelmingly professed support of the Christian religion, primarily by exalting its adherents to favoured positions of employment within governmental departments (Peebles 2006: 64). Academic surveys concerning the inception of Christian evangelism into Sri Lanka seem to concentrate largely – if not solely - on the contention that arose from its contact with Buddhism. Of course given that Buddhism was the largest of all the religions present within Sri Lanka, it would obviously be prone to attract the majority of scrutiny from competing Christian sources, who would inevitably interpret its stature and status as somewhat of a threat to the success of missionary activity. Missionary encounters with religions outside of Buddhism seems to receive little mention in the work of scholars; the suggestion being that they remained largely outside the focus of Christian mission during this period, for perhaps due to their inferior size in comparison to Buddhism,

they were not as fervently criticised and rebuked. There appears a trend among the collected efforts that comprise missionary works in Sri Lanka which sought to, quite literally, demonise Buddhism. Malalgoda recounts how routine publications produced by British missions in Sri Lanka included such defaming descriptions of Buddhism as allegedly being the 'stronghold of Satan', all the while emphasising certain elements of Buddhist practice which they perhaps mistakenly identified as being 'idolatrous' (Malalgoda 1976: 205). Some missionaries also began attempts to intellectually debunk the Buddhist worldview, arguing it to be both a nihilistic and irrational system (Harris 2006: 187).

Many Sri Lankan Buddhists ergo understandably felt threatened by the island's Christian presence, for the Christianity which had been exported to Sri Lanka during the island's tripartite colonial period had always been aggressively oriented towards undermining the stability of Buddhism as the predominant faith of the island. As such many Sinhala suffered twofold within Sri Lanka's colonial era, firstly due to their ethnic identity which was discriminated against by the British racial classification and stereotyping that unfairly branded them as 'lazy' (Peebles 2006: 59), depressing their general socio-economic conditions by denying fair access to both clerical (Gibney & Hansen: 587) and manual labour markets (Kanapathipillai 1995: 326). Secondly due to their traditional adherence to Buddhism, the Sinhala were harassed by Christian missionaries and further denied opportunities to improve their social standing and financial wellbeing. Accordingly with a legacy of this nature and a previous association to a prejudiced political institution, Christianity came to be viewed by some Sinhala as a subversive influence upon their ethnic group. Sinhala mythological accounts previously referenced also draw a distinct correlation between

Sinhala ethnicity and Buddhist religiosity, and so Sinhala who come to embrace Christianity can be perceived to have in many respects relinquished their ethnic loyalty. This remains a constant source of contention as Christian missionary groups have continued since colonial times to enthusiastically seek converts (Woods 2013: 658).

So far however this chapter has only presented an insight into ethnic conflict which precedes the ethnonationalist conflict, despite having begun to argue that it is a form of conflict that has endured into Sri Lanka's post-war period. The evidence for this protracted ethnic conflict is manifold; ranging from the continual international Tamil campaigning against institutionalized Sinhala discrimination (Jeyapal 2013: 559), Sinhala-Buddhist violence against neighbouring Muslims and attacks upon Christian places of worship (McGilvray 2011: 53 & Woods 2012: 211). Additionally one ought to be reminded here of the post-war efforts towards reviving the LTTE as were documented in the previous chapter, as well as the lingering pro-LTTE contingents amongst various Sri Lankan Tamil expatriate communities (Pragasam 2012: 16). The persistent vision of Tamil Eelam is upheld for the identical reasons spurning the pursuits of legal sanctions against the Sri Lankan Government by Tamil activists as referenced above, namely that the current administration continues to deprive Sri Lanka's Tamil minority of fundamental human liberties, owing to the unyielding influence of Sinhala ethnonationalist politics (Ratnapalan 2012: 1541). Note also the earlier discussion during this chapter of sustained Tamil-Muslim estrangement beyond the cessation of the Civil War as similarly supporting this assertion. Accordingly one may evidently witness the continuity of these pre-war ethnic contentions in the post-war environment, for the above makes reference all of the

inter (including Sinhala-Tamil, Sinhala-Muslim, and Tamil-Moor) and intra (specifically Sinhala Buddhist-Christian) aspects of ethnic conflict that were observable prior to the onset of the Sri Lanka Civil War.

3.3. Conclusion

As was detailed in the opening chapter of this thesis, the Sri Lankan Civil War was considered to have reached termination on May 16th 2009. Although there is scope, as was also previously discussed, to challenge the precision of this dating, the point nevertheless remains that at the time of conducting this research the Sri Lankan Civil War has definitively been consigned to the not-so-distant past. Open warfare may now have vanished from the island, but Sri Lanka is still yet to recover from the greater conflict narrative at play. Therefore within the confines of this thesis, the 'conflict' identified within the title should now be understood as being in reference to both an ethnonationalist component as concerns the Sri Lankan Civil War, as well as the underlying ethnic aspect which causally birthed and yet has survived beyond this period of ethnonationalist conflict. Accordingly though there may no longer be active separatist violence against the Sri Lankan State such as there was during the Civil War, the inter- and intra-ethnic conflict which had previously begotten the recent spate of internal warfare nevertheless endures. As such, this would account for the continued presence of inter-religious peace organizations in post-war Sri Lanka, as will be detailed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Yet before advancing to examine these organizations to any specific degree, it is first necessary in the impending chapter to determine the theoretical utility of an inter-religious model of conflict resolution whilst

acknowledging contextual specifics. Such will provide the grounding for a hypothesized appraisal of the Sri Lankan Hindu community's relationship to peace initiatives of this kind, in preparation to be measured against a later field data accumulation.

Chapter 4 – Reconciling Inter-Religious Pursuits toward Conflict Resolution with the Sri Lankan Situation and its Hindu Community

4.1. A Theoretical Discussion of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding as a Medium for Contextual Conflict Resolution

Outspoken atheist and Nobel Laureate in Physics, Professor Steven Weinberg, is oft-quoted by the patriarchs of the 'New Atheism' in retort of religion where he once stated that 'for good people to do evil things, that takes religion' (see Dennett 2007: 279 & Dawkins 2009: 283) . In terms of what specific 'evil things' religion allegedly inspires in people, it seems that fomenting of conflict is at the fore. The late Christopher Hitchens in his polemic '*God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*' exemplifies the case in point with regards to the ills of sectarianism and violence, critiquing religion on the grounds of how adept it appears to be at antagonizing and sustaining conflict through such contextual examples as Imperial Japan and post-revolution Iran (Hitchens 2007). This profoundly cynical perspective of proponents of New Atheism perhaps at times overshadows their judgement of certain positive aspects of religion, particularly in terms of how faith communities have positively contributed to the resolution of conflict. This 'secularist paradigm' according to Powers, is a viewpoint which is largely ignorant of rigorous investigation, as it tends to overestimate the role of religion in conflict instigation whilst overlooking many of the positive contributions of religious actors (Powers 2010: 320-321). Perhaps though this oversight may a consequence of religious peace initiatives appearing to make generally modest contributions to conflict

resolution (Smock 2010: 43), although this should not warrant such a disparaging arbitration of religion in terms of its relationship to discord. In fact Abu-Nimer remarks that religiously based peacebuilding has been unable to realize its full potential due to a lack of consideration from both academic and professional bodies which remain unfairly entangled within the secularist paradigm (Abu-Nimer 2013: 72).

Sharply contrasting the secularist paradigm is the traditional thinking of many faith practitioners, which postulates that religion itself is the only means to realising peace through a self-perceived monopoly on the moral values required for this transformation (Funk & Woolner 2011: 351). The fault of this position is identical to that which weakens the secularist paradigm in that it portrays a parochial representation of religion, hence why prominent scholars such as Appleby prefer to regard religion's relationship to peace and conflict as being on more 'ambivalent' terms in how religion is neither purely a vehicle for peace nor exclusively a conduit for violence. The reality, says Appleby, is that religion can be potentially either in equal measure (Appleby 2000: 27). According to Funk & Woolner, this mediating perspective in the discourse surrounding religion and its relationship to both peace and conflict is one that has in recent times gained quite the precedence over that of either the extremities of the secularist paradigm or the traditional practitioner perspective, yet is also informed by them both (Funk & Woolner 2011: 355). Funk & Woolner go on to explain that this 'peace with religion' approach relies on critiquing and counterbalancing elements of both the secularist paradigm or 'peace without religion' approach, as well as the 'peace through religion' approach conventionally favoured by religious adherents. What results from this is an assessment of religion's role in peace and conflict, which though mindful of religion's capability to disturb

peace through intolerance and sectarianism, offers alongside this a strategy to welcome religion on the grounds that it also generally possesses various valuable moral and ethical resources for fomenting harmonious human interaction (Funk & Woolner 2011: 356).

The consideration then that religion of all expressions can be pragmatic in the quest for conflict resolution on the basis of their essential moral and ethical value systems, is what appears to be the fundamental generalisation from which the theoretical lining of interfaith-based conflict resolution begins to unfurl (Broadhead 2007: 6)[33]. However the next step in developing the theory is to note just how this principle of ubiquitous potential for peacebuilding inherent across religious boundaries becomes consolidated by the position of faith communities and their leaders within the greater societal construct. Johnston (2005) comprehensively elaborates upon this assertion wherein he had compiled a seven-point list which details thoroughly why it is that faith communities generally enjoy such a tremendous platform within society from which they are able to labour for the cause of peace. Without reiterating Johnston verbatim here, I believe it is a fair undertaking to condense his work into the following ruling principle: religion can prove a valuable mechanism for mobilising society towards the realisation of peace, due to it being typically a trusted and therefore

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[33] It must be noted that although in Smock's introduction to his edited volume *Religious Contributions to Peacemaking* the categories of 'religious peacebuilding/making' and inter-religious peacebuilding appear to be treated as synonyms (Smock 2010: xvi), Powers nevertheless confirms that inter-religious peacebuilding is instead just one facet of the wider phenomenon which may be termed religious peacebuilding (Powers 2010: 339). It appears that the crux of this distinction rests upon the inherent ecumenical nature of inter-religious peacebuilding, for religious peacebuilding might also take the form of being somewhat introspective insomuch as directing individual religious traditions to evaluate exclusively their own particular resources and ability for conflict resolution (Halafoff 2013: 59). This in turn gives rise to the various sub-dimensions of 'Jewish Peacebuilding' (Gopin 2004: 114) or 'Buddhist Peacebuilding' (Hertog 2010: 93) and so on, as the chapter titles of Coward & Smith's *Religion and Peacebuilding* confirms (Coward & Smith 2004: v-vi). Although this thesis predominantly contributes to scholarly discourse of inter-religious peacebuilding from the perspective of a single community in a particular context, it is also of value to religious peacebuilding in a broader sense by expanding insight into 'Hindu peacebuilding' along the lines of this particular context.

influential voice within society to which many from all social echelons are keen to refer in the face of moral conundrums (Johnston 2005: 211-212). Furthermore, Vendley notes how generally religion is not just deeply entrenched within society, but is also widely dispersed, meaning that it can constitute a powerful communication infrastructure that can access areas where other institutions have only a nascent presence (Vedley 2005: 94). Of course, though, context is instrumental in endowing religious communities with such capability, for in secularized societies this influence would surely be reduced.

However, to now further explore the theory of inter-religious engagement as a suitable tool for conflict resolution, one must consider how these resources and channels of influence may be translated into practical mechanisms. Hertog seems to prefer a threefold theoretical construct, originally proffered by Appleby, within which are identified three methods through which religious communities can function as agents of conflict resolution. Specifically these include the following modes of action: first, that of 'crisis mobilization', followed by that of 'saturation' and finally that of 'intervention' (Hertog 2010: 88). To take the first of these for the sake of further elaboration, 'crisis mobilization' involves a spontaneous leap to action on the part of religious leaders toward a public platform which they may then utilise as a means of vocalising opposition to conflict (Appleby 2000: 230). The second of these 'models' is that of 'saturation', which constitutes a long-term development of the initial crisis mobilization. Whilst like the crisis mobilization model saturation also begins as a spontaneous outcry against conflict, the saturation model does in contrast seek to stabilise its anti-conflict sentiment in long-term projection by founding institutions and organisations which aim to engender peace-building principally by education and

dialogue (Appleby 2000: 237). Finally the 'intervention' aspect of Appleby's theory includes religious leaders who are external to conflicting parties, engaging with these factions in order to mediate a solution to the conflict (Appleby 2000: 239). When one is pressed to examine the Appleby framework in light of my own doctoral research, what becomes clear is that once confronted with fluctuation in the nature of a contextualised conflict one perhaps ought to consider that each of the models proposed in this theory should be relative to the particular manifestation of the conflict at hand.

In terms of this 'contextualised conflict', what of course is meant here is that of contemporary Sri Lanka which this thesis has so far argued contains a two-fold infrastructure featuring a constant ethnic conflict and a period of ethnonationalist conflict derived from this. Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is fundamentally an issue of perception and values – mutual negative perceptions between ethnic groups results in inter- and intra- group hostilities and factionalism. In order to override this antagonism, what is required is for these subversive principles to be allayed with contrasting ones which instead foment inter- and intra-group solidarity and respect amongst ethnic communities. Given that religion is argued to contain positive values of this kind according to the theory previously discussed, religious communities and their figureheads are thus endowed with the potential – or one might even argue, the responsibility – to attempt this readjustment of principles and standpoints. Of the three models within the Appleby framework, for this end only the saturation model seems entirely appropriate as this method is centred upon education and dialogue which aims to reverse directives towards conflict. Crisis mobilization may presently be redundant with regards to the ethnic conflict aspect of the conflict in contemporary

Sri Lanka, due to this variant of conflict having originated during the island's late colonial era. Perhaps the crisis mobilization model may have proven useful at the emergence of this conflict, with religious leaders acting as vocal opponents to a rising tide of belligerent perceptions materializing within the communal value matrix. However with the onset of ethnonationalist conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka, it is difficult to imagine crisis mobilization not seeming an appropriate measure to take when faced with the prospect of large-scale devastation and contempt.

Appleby's intervention model seems to intuitively suggest an approach more suited to that of Sri Lanka's ethnonationalist conflict, wherein conflict can be easily traced to contentiously opposed forces to which religious leaders united in the thirst for peace are largely external. Though a degree of flexibility would be required according to the Appleby theoretical framework in terms of the role inter-religious peacebuilding could play within the realms of conflict resolution in Sri Lanka, undoubtedly it suggests that such could offer valuable service to resolution in the face of either of the manifestations of the conflict. Another theoretical framework which would apply to the concept of inter-religious engagement as a vehicle for conflict resolution is that which is engineered by Sampson from a compilation of case studies from various global sources of conflict. Sampson dissects the manner by which inter-religious cooperation can embark on the path to conflict resolution into four categories of action; namely, that of religious representatives acting as 'advocates', 'intermediaries', 'observers' and 'educators' (Sampson 2007: 280). Sampson's framework in essence overlaps that of Appleby's, with the advocates' role equating to the crisis mobilization model, the educators' role being tantamount to the saturation model and the intermediaries' role being quite obviously similar to the

intermediary model. As far as the observers' role is concerned, this seems to sit upon the boundary between the crisis mobilization and saturation models in how it involves a sustained active presence which monitors events with a view to maintaining a long-term peace, though it also incorporates the idea of immediate impromptu intervention in conflict escalation should this need arise (Sampson 2007: 290).

Like the Appleby framework which it so closely resembles, the Sampson framework would also seem to suggest that inter-religious attempts at conflict resolution should indeed be considered pertinent within either dimension of the conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka, be it either ethnonationalist conflict or pure ethnic conflict. Nevertheless where these two theoretical frameworks diverge over Sampson's introduction of the 'observers' role, what one is presented with here is another workable method by which inter-religious engagement can be instigated as a means of conflict resolution. Applying this in a modern Sri Lankan context, should religious leaders have adopted the observers role it would have entailed that from the origination of ethnic conflict religious authorities could have become temperately active by attempting to discourage belligerences, and should the various clashes of violence still have occurred despite these efforts, could have shifted into a more dynamic denunciation of hostilities. However with regards to inter-religious peace operations in Sri Lanka, an apparent point that immediately comes to mind is a consideration of whether or not this mode of approaching conflict resolution has been at all a helpful one in either phase of the conflict fluctuation. From the outset, the notion of inter-religious reconciliation movements having contributed anything of significance to the peace process during ethnonationalist conflict of the Sri Lankan

Civil War is challenged somewhat by how this period eventually came to a closure. The 2009 ceasefire between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan State was not a product of a mutually acknowledged peace programme (Goodhand and Korf 2011: 13), for instead, to put it candidly, the LTTE were effectively bludgeoned into submission by the military powers of the State.

Moreover, with the various signifiers of continued unrest in post-war Sri Lanka that were referenced towards the conclusion of the previous chapter, the suggested hitherto efficacy of Sri Lankan inter-religious peace initiatives appears somewhat dubious. Yet according in theory to either the Appleby or Sampson frameworks, there appears little to suggest that inter-religious peace organizations would not have been equipped to address the conflict of Sri Lanka regardless of its present manifestation. In fact, with the various factions of the conflict being largely divergent along religious as well as ethnic lines, inter-religious engagement appears to be a rather appropriate means through which to pursue resolution. What then could have proven problematic for inter-religious peace efforts in this context, so that they would appear to have contributed little to allaying contentious circumstances? Perhaps it is within the conceptual theory of inter-religious peace efforts that there is a complication. By conceptual theory I am here referring to the foundational idea upon which the notion of inter-religious cooperation appears a viable route towards resolving conflict. Namely, as was previously discussed, this is the assertion that the 'world' religions share in an intrinsic appreciation of peace alongside a detestation of hatred and violence. Remembering though Funk & Woolner's 'religion with peace' approach and Appleby's concept of 'ambivalence' with regards to input of religion within conflict and its resolution, it seems possible that one or more of Sri Lanka's

religious communities failed to appreciate these peaceable resources within their tradition, opting instead for exclusivism and non-cooperation. Furthermore, given that contentious ethnic divisions appear to run parallel to religious differences, any religious partitioning of this kind could have even exacerbated conflict between ethnic groups.

However given that this thesis focuses on the Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives, I will not be hereafter concerning myself to any specific extent with how faith communities other than Sri Lankan Hindus composed themselves in light of inter-religious pursuits of conflict resolution. Accordingly, I am thus only able to assess the position of Sri Lankan Hindus in relation to the theory of inter-religious peacebuilding in terms of whether religious belief would be conducive to peace and the rejection of violence, or indeed supportive of it. In becoming familiar with the philosophies and theologies of the Hindu tradition, and indeed the Sanskrit epics which Hindus approach with veneration, alongside Appleby's concept of '*ambivalence*', I came to question the premise that Hindus would necessarily opt to become involved with inter-religious peace initiatives. In the specific case of Hinduism for example, there are mainline philosophical concepts and sacred narratives which celebrate certain mortal heroes and immortal divinities for their martial prowess and exploits. Dubois, whilst exploring the possibilities of religion as a medium of peace-making in the contemporary world, states that the narrative or indeed 'storytelling' aspect of religion provides a way in which authentic conduct can be measured for those who acknowledge them as sacred (Dubois 2008: 402). What this entails is that religious narratives as much as any systematic doctrine, can be utilised by adherents as a means of determining what it truly means to claim a

religious identity for oneself in terms of the values and perceptions one should possess. Kadayifci-Orellana expands upon this by acknowledging the significance of 'religious texts and prophetic stories' as being inclusive of narratives which extol and instruct in peacebuilding (Kadayifci-Orellana 2013: 152).

Francis Cardinal Arinze, a senior member of the Roman Catholic clergy, produced in the publication '*Religions for* Peace' what is essentially a manifesto for the adoption of inter-religious conflict resolution. Within this, he confirms Kadayifci-Orellana's observation where he makes reference to various sacred narratives from across the spectrum of religious traditions, including Hinduism (Arinze 2002: 12). The quote Arinze adopts to supposedly illustrate the thesis that all religions intrinsically promote peacebuilding[34] is taken from the Sanskrit Epic '*The Mahābhārata*', where it states: 'This is the sum of Duty: Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you' (5: 1517). However the apparent contention with this appropriation is that it appears to be disjointed from the greater narrative context, for Thompson suggests that the sacred Epics of Hinduism do not contain any firm injunction to practise nonviolence, for instead there is in fact approbation of violent conduct (Thompson 1988: 64).Thus the question arises now around whether the beliefs of Sri Lankan Hindus would as previous theory predicts actually compel them to seek peace-building strategies, or could they in fact inspire participation in violence? This situation seems particularly ambiguous given that mythic warrior paragons are juxtaposed in modern Hinduism with other venerated figures such as M K Gandhi, who appear to suggest that Hinduism promotes non-violence as the highest ideal. What then is a Hindu to construe from their faith perspective with regards to the issue of conflict and

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[34] Which is of course not entirely consistent with the *peace with religion* approach in that it does not, as was previously explained within Chapter 1, account fairly for religion's capacity for violence.

violence? Should one rightly identify with Rama and glorify the warrior ideal, or should one conversely reject all faith in the righteousness of violence in the same vein as Gandhi? This apparent dichotomy within modern Hinduism has surely the potential to profoundly impact upon the Sri Lankan Hindu community's engagement with conflict resolution, and so the section that follows will outline the essential Hindu ethic towards violence with a view to explicating a notional application within this contextual reality.

4.2. Hypothesized Issues Surrounding Sri Lankan Hindu Engagement with Inter-Religious Peacebuilding

'Supreme Lord, let there be peace in the sky and in the atmosphere. Let there be peace in the plant world and in the forests. Let the cosmic powers be peaceful. Let the Brahman, the true essence and source of life, be peaceful. Let there be undiluted and fulfilling peace everywhere' – *Atharva Veda*[35].

'When Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, reached Swarga, the abode of Indra, he did not find his brothers there. Instead he found the Kauravas, the villains who had provoked a war that had led to the death of millions. "How can this be?" he asked Indra, king of the devas. Indra informed him that the Kauravas had died on the battlefield upholding their duty as warriors, and hence were transported to heaven' – *The Mahābhārata*[36].

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[35] As quoted in Mansigh (1995: 71).
[36] As quoted in Pattanaik (2003: 154).

The previous section of this chapter deduced that inter-religious peacebuilding may in theory be a competent mechanism for addressing conflict resolution, essentially as a result of religion generally possessing moral sensitivities and values which are partial towards peace. It additionally discussed how Dubois for one argues that such may be located within the doctrinal catalogue of a given religious tradition, although also within sacred narratives which depict exemplars upon which adherents are to model themselves. Following this point, I had begun in the previous section to ruminate on whether such a view may validly be extended so as to encompass Hinduism, given that elements of its doctrinal and narrative reservoir seemed to embrace violence and war as warmly as it did peace and non-violence[37]. The above quotes adopted from sacred Hindu textual sources indicate within the first one that though there may be evidence that Hinduism prizes peace as ideal, it coexists with the notion central to the second which describes provocation of and participation in gratuitous violence as virtuous conduct. The *Mahābhārata*, the world's lengthiest epic poem from which the second of these quotations was lifted, is understood traditionally within Hinduism as a medium of religious instruction so that audiences may arrive at an essential comprehension of Hindu truths (Klostermaier 2007: 61). However Hinduism is marked for its multifaceted nature, which has prompted scholarly debate regarding the complexity of 'defining' Hinduism even to the extent of challenging the use of the singular term 'Hinduism' as a catchment for such diversity in the religious thought and practice it encompasses (Fowler 1997: 7).

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[37] As is illustrated by the quotes present at the beginning to this current section from sacred Hindu textual sources.

Though there may arguably be many Hinduisms, the central narrative of the *Mahābhārata* is underlined by a prevailing system of Hindu thought, with the tenets of which even today being referred to as 'orthodox', and in particular the '*varna*' or 'caste' social order (Sutton 2000: 50). Yet perhaps the most globally renowned Hindu figure today has to be one Mohandas K 'Mahatma' Gandhi. However it would appear that he was quite the Hindu heretic in many ways, rejecting as he did the orthodox social structure pertaining to *varna* stratification[38] and positively engaging with those which this system delineated as 'outcasts' (Hinnells & Sharp 1972: 130). Gandhi was perhaps most famous for having adopted the principle of non-violence or '*ahimsa*', which though definitely present in Hinduism, was escalated in his personal belief to the position of a preeminent extreme comparable to Jainism. In fact, Chatterjee argues that Gandhi's personal religiosity appears to be in many respects a synthesis of Hinduism with Jain thought, particularly where the emphatic non-violence is concerned (Chatterjee 1983: 33). In discarding then the traditional interpretation of '*varna-dharma*' and prompting a universal commitment to practise of complete non-violence, Gandhi essentially eradicated the very source and justification for Hindu engagement in warfare. However whilst claiming to not have abandoned Hinduism (Allen 2007: 291), Gandhi had debatably thus depicted a Hinduism which was quite a significant departure from its conventional orthodox incarnation, meaning that he is

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[38] This is not to suggest however that Gandhi rejected the notion of *varna* in absolute terms; in fact, his envisaged utopian India was predicated upon a bedrock of caste delineation and observance (Roy 2014: 25). However, a number of key distinctions may be noted in terms of how Gandhi imagined the institution of caste, and how it has conventionally been understood according to the orthodox Hindu framework. For example, Gandhi dismissed the orthodox conception that castes were arranged hierarchically, and so presented an arguably more egalitarian vision of this social structure (Roy 2014: 26). The ostensive complication with this however in light of his universal insistence on non-violence, which will be discussed in the main body of this research momentarily, is the presence of the Kshatriya, a *varna* of which much more will be said during the course of this chapter. Whilst the orthodox rendering of *varna-dharma* has, as will be explained in much more detail at a later stage, allowed for – and even to some extent encouraged – this particular *varna* to engage in warfare, Gandhi insisted that the Kshatriya were to perform their function as societal guardians non-violently (2015: 65), which he himself claimed to have fulfilled via his 'civil disobedience' as a form of resistance to perceived oppression (Arnold 2014: 23). Again, this serves to only further evidence Gandhi's significant distance from an orthodox reading of *varna-dharma*.

often referred to as a 'reformer' of the Hindu tradition (Jordens 1970: 53). Rejecting these certain pivotal components of orthodox Hindu belief and practice, particularly in terms of the adulation of total pacifism which is evidently so central to his personal belief, ultimately seems to distance Gandhian thought from its supposedly Hindu base.

To reframe this discussion then within the context of this thesis, how does the belief system of the Sri Lankan Hindu community contribute to their engagement with inter-religious peacebuilding? Clearly this section hitherto has alluded to something of a dichotomy within Hinduism in regards to notions of war and peace, with an ideal of non-violence existing somewhere in synchronicity with an orthodox social paradigm positing the necessity of a sacrosanct warrior tradition and their duty to dispense righteous violence. In terms of participating in inter-religious pursuits of conflict resolutions, if consensus among Sri Lanka Hindus regarding the nature of violence was consistent with the reformed Gandhian Hinduism, then surely such a lofty regard of non-violence would have ensured that the Sri Lanka Hindu community would have become seamlessly integrated into such efforts to quell the conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka. Keethaponcalan and Krishna both note some Sri Lankan Hindus as having embraced non-violent methods of protest against Government policy after being inspired by Gandhian *satyagrahis*, suggesting that this could indeed be a possibility (Keethaponcalan 2014: 298 & Krishna 1999: 73).To the contrary though, could not a possible continued adherence to the orthodox model of Hinduism maintain an ethical perspective which potentially provides an impasse to Sri Lankan Hindus becoming involved within such interfaith peace-building initiatives? Perhaps this would explain why in spite of some appearing to ally themselves with the

Gandhian approach to conflict resolution, the LTTE still nonetheless came to be comprised of professed Hindus who were willing to employ violent means to safeguard their civil liberties (Roy 2004: 43).

It is worth noting here that the leader of the militant LTTE separatists is himself a member of a caste previously associated with warfare[39] (Roberts 2005a: 494), and so perhaps there is the possibility here that a sense of allegiance to caste stipulations encouraged his ascension to militancy. Initially then I was already somewhat sceptical that the Sri Lankan Hindu community would be the most enthusiastic of faith groups to engage in conflict resolution, or initiate any attempts themselves. My original argument in support of this presupposition was one based upon the ethnic demographic overlap between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Hindu community, which may have caused the latter to forsake inter-religious attempts at conflict resolution due to a potentially unanimous loyalty to the former. However could it also be that religious sentiments supplemented ethnic affiliation with regards to prospectively incentivizing Sri Lankan Hindus to have favoured advocating war over allying with inter-religious peace organizations? This chapter will now progress in the pursuit of the former of these points, by examining how the Tamil ethnicity of Sri Lankan Hindus may have entailed the avoidance of participation with inter-religious peace organizations. Following this, I would articulate an overview of Hinduism's doctrinal and narrative base with a view to identifying areas which are relevant and applicable to the discussion of conflict and its resolution. Such will then be subject to further review in context, where Hindu discourse on the nature of war

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[39] I state here previously for Villupillai Prabakharan belongs to the Sri Lankan Karaiyar caste, which though in recent history are by vocation traditionally fisherman, popular folklore nevertheless maintains that previous to this the Karaiyar were feared mercenaries and noted exponents of naval warfare. Hence it is such which may link the *dharma* of the Karaiyar to the *dharma* of the Kshatriya.

and peace will be examined in light of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka so as to explore the possibilities of the Sri Lankan Hindu community's engagement with either peace-making initiatives or militant insurgency.

4.2.1. Sri Lankan Hindus and LTTE Proximity

Why Sri Lankan Hindus may have deferred from participating or initiating conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka could be dependent on a possible allegiance to the LTTE, which is suggested by the fact that the majority of the individuals in the LTTE were simultaneously members of the Sri Lankan Hindu community (Roy 2004: 43). It is unspecified in current scholarly work whether it was solely the leaders of the Sri Lanka Hindu community, the laity, or even a mixture of the two that were recruited into the LTTE. What is certain though is that the LTTE was comprised almost entirely from the Sri Lankan Hindu community, potentially including both leadership and lay individuals which could have levied pressure upon the other Sri Lankan Hindus to side with the LTTE in the recent Civil War. LTTE affiliation among Sri Lankan Hindus would be problematic for inter-religious peace efforts insomuch as it could have inspired them to forsake involvement in such activities given that they aim to engender unity within Sri Lanka, which could easily be perceived as undermining the LTTE's separatist agenda. It may be worth recalling at this point that the LTTE are suspected to have carried out the 2007 assassination of Selliah Parameswaran Kurukkal, a Hindu *pujāri* who had amicably interacted with Sri Lanka's still current President Mahinda Rajapakse (Reddy 2007), and so there is a strong sense of reality that would underlie this inevitable pressure to avoid

subverting the efforts of the LTTE. Finally if one assumes that the Sri Lankan Hindu component of the LTTE is comprised of both leadership figures and lay individuals, then clearly the overwhelming trend of the Sri Lankan Hindu community in its entirety would be to conform to the wishes of the LTTE and so avoid undermining its trajectory.

A pertinent question in light of the above discussion may be how it is that the LTTE came to be composed predominately of professing Hindus, when the movement itself possesses a secular foundation that is disassociated from furthering any specific religious aims. Perhaps this may simply be a consequence of the fact that, as this research has previously demonstrated, almost the entirety of the Hindu community in Sri Lanka are of Tamil ethnicity. As such with the descent into Civil War in Sri Lanka being a result of militant Tamil counteraction to perceived discrimination and chauvinism of the Sinhala dominated State, it appears obvious that the issues which the Tamil militants were railing against are issues that by proxy affect the Hindu community by way of its primary ethnic relation. In other words, because the Tamil and Hindu communities are all but synonymous with one another, an issue which looks to destabilise the island's ethnic Tamils thus simultaneously impacts upon the Sri Lankan Hindu community. One can then argue that the Sri Lankan Hindus which composed the majority of the LTTE's ranks were not doing so as Hindus per se, but instead purely for their interest as ethnic Tamils. It would appear that this could be an implication of these otherwise Hindu individuals joining a patently secular organisation without there been any evidence to suggest that their religious orientation has played any key as a motivation to join the LTTE. The only evidence available it seems as to why any of the LTTE soldiers chose to align

themselves with the movement is the struggle for the dignity of Tamil independence in the face of prejudicial authorities in Sri Lanka that had continued to impose limitations upon their rights and maintain hostility to their minority presence (see Bass 2008: 270 & Bruland 2012: 2139 for example). The LTTE mission in Sri Lanka does not then appear to have primarily appealed to Sri Lankan Hindus by any means engendered by this religious adherence; instead the suggestion is that any Hindu support of the LTTE is a product of political sensibilities related to the defence of Tamil ethnic rights, which can quite clearly stand apart from any religious affiliation.

Nevertheless according to one scholar, the essential secularism of the LTTE did not seem to have prevented the organisation from hijacking elements of so-called 'Hindu mysticism' and superimposing them into its propaganda and recruitment drives (Law 2009: 247). What exactly is meant by 'Hindu mysticism' in this case is left unspecified, and there does not appear to be another available source which could shed further detailed light on just how the LTTE appropriated these mystical aspects of Hindu belief into their enlistment campaign. Yet the LTTE was a Tamil ethnonationalist organisation, meaning that its composition was characteristically Tamil, who are an ethnic community of Sri Lanka which is majority Hindu. As such it seems possible for the LTTE to have commandeered Hindu concepts and symbols so as to weave them into their own recruitment narrative, precisely because it is targeting a people to whom such things retain meaning. The LTTE therefore would have perhaps benefitted from exploiting Hindu imagery to engage the Tamil populace allied to this religious orientation with a view to forging an association between the LTTE and Hinduism. What this had the potential to achieve was a convincing case for Hindu Tamils to pledge allegiance to the LTTE, for as Seneca

the Younger pronounced, 'religion is regarded by the common people as true....and by the authorities as useful' (Rodriques & Harding 2008: 113). However it still remains of interest as to what specific elements of Hinduism constituted this 'Hindu mysticism' which came to be introduced within the LTTE's recruitment scheme, as this is of paramount import in terms of understanding of how the Sri Lankan Hindu community's religious affiliation oriented them in light of any opportunities to become engaged in inter-religious peace initiatives.

4.2.2. The Contextual Implications of Hindu Ethical Responses towards Violence and Peace

Regarding then the Sri Lankan Hindu community's relationship to the LTTE, it seemed apparent that as many of its number were affiliated to the LTTE, this could ensure that many within the community would be rather reluctant to engage in inter-religious attempts at peace-building, which could be perceived as antithetical to the LTTE mission. In addition to this initial conjecture, I have now begun to examine whether the religious underpinnings of the Sri Lankan Hindu community would only reinforce this perspective, primarily through the concepts of *varna* and *dharma*. Within traditional Hindu thought, rooted in Vedic lore and expanded upon in successive scriptural sources, there is derived the concept of each individual born into the temporal domain as slotting into a divinely ordained social stratification system. This hierarchical social arrangement is termed in Sanskrit as '*varna*', meaning 'colour', for it is comprised of four ascending tiers each of which is represented by a particular symbolic colour. All who are born are supposedly aligned

to a single one of these castes, and depending on this assignment one's code of conduct is thereafter determined (Dandekar 1996: 144). In short then, each position within the *varna* system prescribes a certain mode of behaviour for those constrained to it. It is this notion of the appropriate behaviour pertaining to any given individual being regulated by their social position which traditionally forms the crux of the Hindu concept of '*dharma*'. *Dharma* is often argued by scholars to be a notoriously troublesome multi-dimensional term to translate accurately into an English understanding (Kunst 1978: 3); however, attempts which have been applauded as somewhat satisfactory can include 'religion', 'law', 'action' or 'duty'.

As a former student of Sanskrit, I prefer to understand *dharma* in a Hindu ethical context at least to correspond to the English term 'duty', due to the concept typically alluding in this case to the premise of social standing demanding unswerving adherence to related codified activity. Although the concept of *dharma* seems to in all instances of Hindu belief constitute the domain of moral and ethical injunctions - pertaining as it does to the first of the four pursuits of human life in classical Hindu thought, defined here as 'virtue' (Parrinder 1973: 61) – Hindu considerations of what constitutes as moral action is not always related to social station. However seemingly tightly linked to *varna*, the concept of dharma is not altogether inseparable from the doctrine of *varnāśramadharma*. Flood comments on how the *varnāśramadharma* system should not be thought of exclusively as the only authoritative representation of Hindu opinion, for there are Hindus who would dispute its credence, with examples including both in particular certain Tantric practitioners and the more progressive disciples of the *bhakti* movement (Holdrege 2004: 238). Nevertheless Flood does argue that *varnāśramadharma* forms the crux of the

longstanding prevailing current of Hindu thought entitled 'Brahminism' or 'Brahminical ideology', and has therefore retained the position of being the most dominant and influential variant of Hindu religiosity (Flood 1996: 58). Whilst there are then other approaches to Hinduism which may be parochial but not altogether irrelevant representations of the tradition, they have in comparison to Brahmanism remained of a minority position amongst Hindus over which they have therefore exercised only a meagre strength of influence.

This would explain why it is that Brahmanism has earned the description of 'orthodoxy' from distinguished scholars of the religion such as Flood (Flood 2003: 4) and Heesterman (Heesterman 1985: 39). Hence when one begins to encounter Hindu perspectives, the ensuing result is that these are coloured predominantly by the Brahminical ideology of which the *varnāśramadharma* system is a fundamental component. As I will explain, the idea of *dharma* though not the inherent property of Brahmanism has nevertheless come to be largely defined by a Brahminical subtext that relates it to the concepts of *varna* and *āśrama*. With the idea of *dharma* in Brahminical Hinduism traditionally constituting the framework from which questions of Hindu ethics could be deduced, whatever one's *varna* and *āśrama* would determine one's *dharma*, and one's *dharma* arbitrated what was proper or right conduct for the person in question. There is in a sense then a relativist aspect to traditional Hindu ethics dependent on the social circumstances of the agent. What may be appropriate for one individual pertaining to their caste or lifestyle may not be suitable activity for another because of their own caste affiliation or indeed stage of life (Jhingran 1989: 76). However the above need not necessarily imply that there are no commonalities between caste or lifestyle *dharma*, as for example the killing of

a *Brahmin* should be considered a morally reprehensible act for persons of all castes and lifestyles to commit, and so forms part of the *dharma* for each of the *varna* stations (Post 1989: 96). It is the second-most senior of Hinduism's four social stations, represented by the colour red as an indicator that this caste radiates the *guna* ('quality') of '*rajas*' or 'passion' and 'activity', that is of particular interest to this thesis.

Subordinate only to the priestly Brahmins of the *varna* hierarchy, the Kshatriya caste is one comprised of regents, warriors and state administrators – essentially all those tasked with the upkeep of a society in terms maintaining structure and stability (Klostermaier 2007: 334). In terms of the *dharma* of the Kshatriya, they are of course bound by the concept to in part refraining from murdering Brahmin as per the aforementioned example, yet are also bound by *dharma* to act in such a way that befits their station as protectors of society. Uniquely it is the Kshatriya which are permitted by their *dharma* to engage in warfare unlike any of the other castes, as a measure to maintain the societal construct from the threat of dissolution (Drekmeier 1962: 84). Whilst proponents of Christianity for instance have over the centuries laboured over a so-called 'just war theory' to negotiate the challenge of apparent unconditional pacifism laid out by Jesus in the Canonical Gospels, Hindus have thus never had to strenuously contend with an ubiquitous pacifism for the predominate religious thought of the Hindu tradition fundamentally contains an ethically mandated resort to martial conflict within the *dharma* of the Kshatriya caste[40] (von Brück 2004: 21). In terms of where the concept of *dharma* is located and expounded within the Hindu tradition, Flood points out that it is primarily a concern of orthodox canonical

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[40] Termed as '*danda*' in Sanskrit sources, meaning 'the stick' as a figurative description that connotes the latent striking capability of the Kshatriya caste's utility in response to an aggressor.

texts supposedly composed nominally by various sages as manuals for a righteous society based on Vedic conduct. Known as the '*Dharma Śāstras'*, these texts are built upon earlier less sophisticated volumes on the exact same matter, known as the '*Dharma Sutras*' (Flood 1996: 56).

However, it would be incorrect to now assume that that *dharma* is anyway confined to ancient bodies of literature which could run the risk of having diminished some or all of its relevance for the contemporary Hindu. Whilst seemingly established as a doctrine in older compendiums of *smrti* texts such as the *Dharma Śāstras* and their predecessors the *Dharma Sutras*, the concept of *dharma* is nevertheless a prominent theme which is continually regurgitated in later *smrti* sources that take the form of myth and pseudo-history. Perhaps the most renowned of that to which I refer here are the two narratives belonging to the grouping of sacred Sanskrit literary texts known as the '*itihāsa*', meaning 'epics' or indeed 'history' despite their disputed claim to historical accuracy (Hirst 1998: 106). Included solely within the *itihāsa* are quasi-universally appreciated tales of the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, to both of which the concept and theme of *dharma* is evidently central. The chief protagonist of the former is one Rāma of *Ayodhyā*, an ancient pseudo-historical Indian aristocrat belonging of course to the Kshatriya caste. The character of Rāma himself seems just as important, if not more than, the actual development of the narrative of which he is a part. The *Rāmāyana* as a literary work, originally considered to have been composed by Valmiki the so-called '*Adikavī*' or 'first-poet' of Sanskrit literature, includes a mythical account of just how the supposedly historical events involving Rāma came to be captured in this sacred verse. The mischievous mythological sage Narada is said to have dictated the story of the *Rāmāyana* in prose format to Valmiki,

whereby in a chance encounter Valmiki pondered if there could be such a reality as a truly intellectually acute and morally flawless human being.

Narada is thus keen to inform Valmiki of the now familiar tale of Rāma of Ayodhyā, who he believes is synonymous with the scholarly paragon Valmiki is attempting to realise. After Narada and Valmiki departed ways after the aforementioned encounter, Hindu lore maintains that the deity Brahma approached Valmiki with the instruction to compose in poetry a rendition of Narada's testimony of Rāma for instruction, which in due time would become the celebrated and venerated text known as the '*Rāmāyana*' (Goldman & Goldman 2004: 76-77). Immediately one may notice that the inceptive purpose of *Rāmāyana* according to Hindu tradition was in order to use the character of Rāma as exemplar, an epitome of moral standards, to which later generations following his epoch should measure and attune themselves. Examples of contemporary literature concerning Hindu myth demonstrate how Rāma has in fact settled into this role as moral instructor (Narayanan 2011: 188), with Nanditha Krishna referring to him with the flattering epithet 'the perfect man'[41] whilst stating how in her native India he has become popularly regarded as the definitive 'role model' for its citizens (Krishna 2001: 73). Moreover, Keethaponcalan argues that the *Rāmāyana* has become the 'very soul' of modern Hinduism (Keethaponcalan 2014: 291), suggesting that its influence is ubiquitously pervasive despite Hinduism appearing to be a truly multifaceted religious entity with no centralized authority (Smith 2005: 108).

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[41] Note also how an English prose translation of the *Rāmāyana* by R K Narayan similarly features this same honorific in reference to Rāma (Narayan 1972: 6).

The work of Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik would also appear to confirm that Rāma is considered by Hindus to be an emblem of human perfection, which ultimately stems from his unswerving adherence to his *dharma* (Pattanaik 2003: 47). Pattanaik, in discussing the significance of Rama's character as a mould for Hindu morality, also introduces a leading figure of the remaining *itihāsa* who performs a similar function to the aforementioned mythic king of Ayodhyā. At the very heart of the *Mahābhārata* is the 'Song of the Lord', better known as the '*Bhagavad Gītā*' in which a pseudo-historical conversation is scripted between two allied ancient Indian aristocrats upon the cusp of a momentous battle, one of whom is generally considered by Hindus to be yet another example of what it is to be a 'perfect man'. This individual alluded to here is of course the illustrious Krishna, possibly the most famed of all Hindu deities and ostensibly the most widely adorned amongst contemporary Hindus says Kinsley (Kinsley 1975: 9). Whilst here there may seem somewhat of a paradox regarding Krishna's nature as being both supposedly that of Divine and human substance simultaneously, Hindu tradition articulates this seeming contradiction through the concept of the '*avatāra*' – that is, with Krishna being a corporeal manifestation of the Divine. In fact, Rāma of Ayodhyā is also traditionally considered a so-called *avatāra* or incarnation of the exact same Deity as is Krishna; and essentially such is what seems to essentially underlie the perfection of these two individuals (Sheth 2002: 99). Another significant commonality between these *avatāras* of the *itihāsa* texts is in regard to *varnāśramadharma*, with both Krishna and Rāma belonging to Kshatriya caste which entails that both willingly engage in and/or condone warfare in each of their respective narratives.

Rāma lays siege to the forces of his nemesis Rāvana, ultimately slaying him in the process. Krishna on the other hand does not actually engage in physical combat, instead he accompanies other Kshatriya into battle and reminds one of their senior command figures that it is his *dharma* as a warrior to fight, in spite of a momentary disinclination on compassionate grounds. Despite this discrepancy, located at the core of each of these narratives is the message that the fulfilment of human potential is linked to the performance of duty (Bhattacharyya 2006: 59 & Sharma 2005: 28), the exact nature of which is defined by the niche one occupies within the cosmic scale. Quite clearly for the Kshatriya, this can often involve participation in war. Dubois' observation that a given religious tradition's orientation towards peace and conflict resolution is coloured by its narrative and doctrinal background (Dubois 2012: 11), makes for an interesting consideration regarding the nature of the Sri Lankan Hindu community's engagement with peace initiatives related to the nation's contemporary conflict. This seems so particularly insofar as the concept of *dharma* is concerned, for when one considers the details of this doctrine with regards to one's duties in a present life in conjunction with the continuation of the caste system in Sri Lankan society, which would place the leader of the LTTE within a social station akin to that of the traditional Kshatriya warrior caste.

The ensuing question is of course as follows: has the concept of *varna-dharma* had any bearing upon the Sri Lankan Hindu community's perception of conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka? If so, could not the implications be that the Hindu community of Sri Lanka may have been reluctant to participate in conflict resolution precisely because it would undermine the *dharma* of certain individuals such as Villupillai Prabhakaran among others who may be identified with the warrior *dharma*?

In addition one should also begin to consider how the theme of *dharma* in Hinduism is draped across a mythic cosmological background of perpetual conflict between forces of righteousness and injustice (von Brück 2004: 19), which would involve little in the way of interpretative skill to align the perceived oppressive Sri Lankan government with the wicked forces that besiege the righteous in such narratives. For example consider here the *Rāmāyana* narrative and the primary antagonist therein, Rāvana the villainous king of Lanka. Rāvana is identified as a type of being known as a '*rākshasa*', which in this author's experience is commonly translated into English as 'demon'[42]. However the issue with this translation is that it is a rather crude one at that, for the Judeo-Christian subtext of the word tends to imply that the *rākshasa* should be understood to be grotesque and intrinsically malevolent supernatural beings.

Instead a more fitting translation would seem to amount to either 'barbarian' or even 'savage', for as Pattanaik explains the *rākshasa* are 'not considered evil' per se, but are ultimately perceived as brutish for their culture or indeed lack of it in how they adhere to a societal construct that 'follows the law of the jungle, where sex and violence are unrestrained and might is right' (Pattanaik 2003: 95-96). In this respect then, the *rākshasa* would appear immoral by the standards of Hindu civilization, and so would therefore naturally be poised in opposition as 'enemies' of the Vedic system which is optimally represented by the figure of Rāma in the *Rāmāyana*. What is significant here however in terms of the relevance of such narrative to the contemporary Sri Lankan situation, is the clear potential for the actions of the chauvinistic contemporary Sri Lankan Government to be portrayed analogously to

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[42] For example, see English translations of the *Rāmāyana* by William Buck (Buck 2000: 345) and Robert P & Sally J Goldman (Goldman & Goldman 1996).

the tyrannical brutish conduct of the *rākshasa* in the perception of the island's Hindus, who appear to be the recipients of this belligerence. Moreover in the Hindu mythos, it is precisely this kind of oppressive behaviour that warrants a retaliatory strike by the Kshatriya according to what is stipulated within the concept of *varna-dharma* –a case in point being the entire crux of the *Rāmāyana* narrative. However the *Rāmāyana* is by no means an isolated illustration of this assertion, for as O'Flaherty claims, this pitched battle between polarised forces which represent 'right' and 'wrong' appears a consistent theme in Hindu mythology (O'Flaherty 1975: 270). To elaborate on O'Flaherty's insight then would be to provide notable examples of Hindu myth which feature this dynamic, and immediately what comes to mind are the *avatāras* of Vishnu whose very purpose of existence is the restoration of righteousness in the world, which often involves martial conflict with '*adharmic*' or 'immoral' opponents (Jackson & Killingley 1998: 119).

Perhaps though a more salient narrative to Sri Lankan Hindus would involve the patron deity of the Tamil people, who as it happens, may be identified in temperament and astrologically with that of the Roman deity Mars. To compare Murugan, the patron deity of the Tamils (Geaves 2006: 35), with the Roman Mars in the manner above suggests at least two basic assumptions of his character and attributes. Firstly and less significantly is his association in Vedic astrology with the so-called 'Red Planet' of our solar system; however, what is additionally implied here is that Murugan would in some way also be affiliated with violence or warfare. According to Hindu myth this Murugan, being a Tamil name variant for Kartikeya or Skanda as this deity is more regularly referred to, is portrayed as the son of Shiva and is born to him for a rather unusual purpose. The story of Murugan's conception

follows the pretext that a powerful being known as an '*asura*', representing like the *rākshasa* the principle of *adharma* or unrighteousness (Daniélou 1991: 64), becomes as a result of a Divine boon invincible to all but the then non-existent son of Shiva. Naturally, this grossly empowered *asura* begins to abuse his strength by terrorizing the Gods and so the need for Shiva to beget male offspring therefore becomes the highest of priorities. There is given a rather longwinded explanation of why the task of encouraging Shiva to father a son is fraught with complication and difficulty, and it serves no real benefit to elaborate on this here beyond learning that the efforts of the Gods are ultimately fruitful and the deity Murugan is thus born.

Storl comments that Indian mythic lore contains several variants of Murugan's conception narrative, but in all cases his birth is for the goal of destroying this rampaging *asura* and this is exactly what he achieves within a mere seven days following his nativity (Storl 2004: 155). Thereafter, Storl continues, Murugan becomes stationed as commander of the Gods' celestial armies, a veritable god of war adept at the slaughter of the corrupt. This myth amongst the many others in the Hindu tradition which feature a righteous warrior martially challenging a tyrannical opponent are sourced in another appendage of the revered *smrti* texts known as the '*Purānas*', which like the *itihāsa* remain significantly influential amongst contemporary Hindus (Rao 2004: 104). My aim so far in this section of my research was to present the proposition that not only could individuals like Prabhakaran in theory be justified in taking up arms against a tyrannical foe according to the *varna-dharma* concept within Hindu tradition, but also that the Sri Lankan Government could easily appear in light of popular Hindu myths and pseudo-history as representing the archetypical *adharmic* enemy and therefore revalidating the

contemporary conflict. What this serves to illustrate in terms of my research is that rather than necessarily inducing Sri Lankan Hindus to cooperate in inter-religious peacebuilding as the work of Dubois and Kadayifci-Orellana might imply, the doctrinal and narrative base of Hinduism may instead provoke a reaction to the contrary whereby Sri Lankan Hindus would be disinterested in engaging with its proponents.

However on what grounds could one determine that Sri Lankan Hindu ethicists would even bother to approach these mythological and pseudo-historical stories to augment their own approach to issue of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka? Firstly, I must reiterate for emphasis just how influential these texts are generally in the Hindu tradition. Subsequently, in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, a chapter authored by Rajmohan Gandhi attempts to outline a Hindu approach to peace-building and reconciliation which imports elements from these exact textual sources as a basis for avoiding war and upholding the principle of *ahimsa* or non-violence (Gandhi 2004: 55-62). Nevertheless he does also acknowledge at least as far as his analysis of the *itihāsa* is concerned, that such sources can simultaneously accommodate hermeneutical approaches that can legitimate warfare in accordance with just principles. For example Gandhi states that the *Mahābhārata* for example 'can be cited to justify war or prove its unmitigated folly' (Gandhi 2004: 49). Later he demonstrates how the former may be observed in application with Hindu nationalists within a contemporary Indian context who draw upon the *Mahābhārata* for justification with regards to employing violent means to address an enemy – a move which in return has been critiqued by some scholars who instead support the latter assertion (Gandhi 2004: 60).Whilst not like Gandhi attempting to argue the buoyancy

of a peace-seeking Hinduism, the work of Shastri and Shastri which explores the notion of non-violence in the Hindu tradition concludes that Hinduism contains a 'balanced view about non-violence and war' (Shastri & Shastri 2000: 80).

As support for their claim, Shastri and Shastri predominately cite from popular *smrti* texts such as the *itihāsa* and the *Purānas*, suggesting yet again that these sources are precisely the ones which Hindus typically approach to determine their ethical positions. I would agree with Menski in holding the opinion that there is indeed quite a stark dichotomy of values within the Hindu sacred narrative base (Menski 1996: 45), indicating thus far a relative ambiguity regarding the Sri Lankan Hindu community's engagement with inter-religious peacebuilding. The principle of *ahimsa* seems to permeate authoritative Hindu textual sources, reverently described as the 'highest virtue' or the 'path of righteousness', yet is juxtaposed alongside the notion of *varna-dharma* that does not preclude acts of violence and warfare which themselves if conducted under the right circumstances could considered 'pure' and entirely of a righteous nature (Shastri & Shastri 2000: 73 & 80). To thus ground the debate in context then, the doctrinal and narrative foundation of the Hindu tradition could perhaps be used to justify Hindu support of the LTTE, with the resultant effect that the Sri Lankan Hindu community avoids participating in inter-religious peace initiatives which would be perceived as subversive to the LTTE's aims. Such applies in both Civil War and post-Civil War, for support for the LTTE seemingly continues even after their official liquidation. However with perhaps as much credence, Sri Lankan Hindus could also interpret their faith tradition's doctrinal and narrative base as an impetus to pursue peace, and as such eagerly participate in inter-religious peacebuilding in the context of contemporary Sri Lanka.

4.2.3. The Prospective Influence of Non-Hindu Religions upon Sri Lankan Inter-Religious Peace Organisations

A final consideration that it seems must be taken into account when contemplating potential impasses with regards to Hindu participation in inter-religious peacebuilding in a contemporary Sri Lankan context, is the extent of influence that non-Hindu religious traditions exert upon movements and organisations of this kind. Where potential non-Hindu interfaith peace organisations begin to pose a challenge to Hindu engagement therein, it seems that there may be difficulties attached to any inter-religious organisation that is an extension of either Buddhist or Christian sources. To begin elaborating, the fundamentalist strain of Buddhism present in contemporary Sri Lanka could be detrimental to positive Hindu perceptions of Buddhists. Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalism[43] is problematic for harmonious inter-religious relations in Sri Lanka primarily it seems due to an absolutist recognition of the Buddhist narrative (Schalk 2011: 56). Moreover such sanctimony has become

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[43] Although it is common to address this same phenomenon as 'Sinhala Buddhist nationalism' (see, for example, Hayward 2011 or Edrishina 2006), I would alternatively opt to use 'Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalism' in a fashion paralleling the work of Bartholomeusz & De Silva (1998). Citing eminent scholars such as Bond and Tambiah, Bartholomeusz & De Silva posit the notion that this ostensibly Buddhist-infused political ideology is merely a manifestation of a fundamentalist interpretation of Buddhism (Bartholomeusz & De Silva 1998: 2). Although there may be certain limitations in attempting to bracket this particular phenomenon under the designation of fundamentalism according to the 'family resemblances' theory of religious fundamentalism devised by Marty & Appleby (1991), such as a lack of evangelical activity (Marty & Appleby 1991: 822), there are many other aspects of it which do correspond agreeably to this framework. For instance, such features an emphasis on asserting boundaries according to a notion of maintaining 'purity' (Marty & Appleby 1991: 821). The boundaries in this case are imagined as primarily a political reality, wherein Sinhala Buddhists are to maintain civil hegemony in Sri Lanka against its purportedly subversive – and therefore 'impure' – non-Buddhist elements (Bartholomeusz & De Silva 1998: 3). As such, although religio-politically oriented terminology such as that employed by Hayward or Edrishina might initially seem the most appropriate means of cataloguing this phenomenon, it is clear that there is as much merit in terming it 'Buddhist fundamentalism', as it is from a fundamentalist reading of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition that the political aspirations of 'Sinhala Buddhist nationalism' (or 'Sinhala ethnonationalism', as this thesis uses) essentially emerge.

underscored by an inflammatory socio-political aspiration, derived from the concept of '*dhammadipa*'[44], whereby Sri Lanka is sanctified as a bastion for the preservation and exaltation of Buddhism (Bond 2004b: 242). Clough notes that the notion of *dhammadipa* has motivated Buddhist fundamentalists in Sri Lanka to adopt an active stance against religious minorities, as their presence can be perceived as an affront to this ideal of contextual Buddhist hegemony (Clough 2008: 337).

Current literature though seems only to focus on the antipathy Buddhist fundamentalism has generated towards the Christian and Muslim communities of Sri Lanka (Bartholomeusz & De Silva 1998; Deegalle 2006; Bastin 2009), and so perhaps one could interpret this as an implication that Hinduism is not perceived in the same manner as either Christianity or Islam. However, would this not seem contradictory given that Hinduism is also a non-Buddhist religious minority in Sri Lanka? Could Hinduism not also then be considered a threat to the Buddhist retention of power in Sri Lanka? I would argue that it would seem inconsistent for Buddhist fundamentalists in Sri Lanka to be entirely tolerant of their Hindu compatriots by the logical extension of *dhammadipa* rhetoric. Although there does not at present appear to be an academic acknowledgement of this, I would propose that there does seem scope for Buddhist fundamentalists to have become critical of Sri Lankan Hinduism on the basis of their non-Buddhist religious orientation, and thus propensity for them to have similarly threatened or intimidated elements of this community. There are perhaps then grounds to suppose that any Buddhist-based interfaith organisation may be met with a degree of suspicion or even outright

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[44] A Sinhala term meaning 'Island of Dhamma', which clearly suggests a vision of the nation regulated and characterized by Buddhism, which key proponents have characterized as an absence of religious minorities (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 186).

cynicism from the Sri Lankan Hindu community, due to Buddhism's association in this national context with anti-Tamil rhetoric and violence to which Sri Lankan Hindus would be obviously in opposition. Of course one could argue here that any Buddhist organisation which retained an interest in both inter-religious engagement and conflict resolution would hardly be the kind that would entertain intolerant views; however, it would doubtlessly be unwise to underestimate the impact of entrenched schemata resulting from the prevalence of hostility towards religious and ethnic others generally within Sri Lankan Buddhism.

Now as far as Christianity in this context is concerned, I have in the course of conducting this research discovered claims of a nature that promotes divide and contention between Sri Lankan Christians and their non-Christian counterparts. What I am referring to here is allegations of 'unlawful' or 'unethical' proselytization on the part of Christian missionaries active in contemporary Sri Lanka. Rasiah explains that the grounds upon which such missionary efforts have become considered morally objectionable is the alleged offering of fiscal incentives to impoverished Sri Lankans in return for their religious allegiance (Rasiah 2011: 55). Whilst the importation of various Western evangelical Christian churches into Sri Lanka has increased markedly of late, DeVotta writes that the assertion that Christian missionaries are bribing individuals into conversion is somewhat spurious (DeVotta 2007: 43-44), although following the tsunami disaster of December 2004 it would seem that there have been certain evangelical Christian organisations participating in the relief effort who have exploited this opportunity to engage with the Sri Lankan public as a means of procuring fresh converts (DeVotta 2007: 45). Rasiah in addition can confirm that certain 'extreme' Christian groups have employed 'very aggressive' forms of

proselytization attempts that have likely contributed to anti-Christian sentiments amongst Sri Lankan Buddhists (Rasiah 2011: 55), although he does not elaborate on what exactly should be precisely defined as excessively hostile here. However what is clear is that these rumours and allegations have caused disquiet amongst Sri Lankan Buddhists to the extent that they have spawned a political agenda through which fears of mass conversion could be concentrated into policy that could assert control over Christian missionary work in the island.

Sri Lanka's 2004, as well as being witness to one of the most prolific natural disasters of modern times, would also observe the formation of the *Jathika Hela Urumaya* (JHU) – a right-wing, Sinhala nationalist inspired political party spearheaded by Buddhist monks in vociferous opposition to the supposed illegitimate conversion tactics favoured by Christian missionaries in Sri Lanka (Bastin 2009: 133). In fact it would appear that this particular point of contention constituted the mainstay of the JHU electoral manifesto, in how they avowed to introduce legislative measures to curb to the continuity of such activities. Hence the infamous 'Anti-Conversion Bill' of 2004 has since been proposed by the JHU, only to face inadequate support in the form of either outright opposition and/or proposed revision within the Sri Lankan Parliament, with such remaining an on-going negotiation which has still yet to be resolved even at the time of writing. What is of specific interest to this research with regards to the JHU's campaign to combat unethical conversion attempts by Christian missionaries are its claims that Buddhists have not been alone in being threatened by subversive Christian evangelism, but also that Sri Lanka Hindus had been targeted in a similar manner and so too have been vulnerable to this same supposed injustice (DeVotta 2007: 43). Deegalle explains that the JHU

claims not only to be pursuing the Anti-Conversion Bill with the defence of Sri Lanka's Buddhists in mind, but also with an interest in preserving the nation's Hindu community from coercive mission (Deegalle 2006: 250). There appears little academic attention paid to whether or not these accusations could be considered valid as far as the experiences of Sri Lanka Hindus in encountering Christian missionaries are concerned.

However Janaka Perera, a journalist writing for the *Asian Tribune* cites 'reliable reports' conducted in Sri Lanka which suggest that Hindus living in the northern regions of the island where dense Hindu populations can be located, have struggled against attempts by Christians to goad them into forsaking their current religious convictions to instead embrace Christianity (Perera 2009). Of course a mass-media journalist referencing unspecified sources as 'reliable' by no means entails that one should be convinced of these words at face value; however, it would nevertheless prove unreasonable to instantly dismiss this professed insight without cogent motive. Could it be possible that some Sri Lankan Hindus have been prey to dubious proselytization techniques of Christian evangelicals? Given what is stated in the published works of Rasiah and DeVotta which mention certain instances of underhand and forceful methods utilised by some Christian missionaries with a view to competitively obtaining converts, one cannot thus altogether discount the sincere probability of such a claim. Where this comes into effect regarding any inter-religious engagement taking place in contemporary Sri Lanka, is in relation to a potentially damaging effect that it may have on Hindu participation alongside representatives from the island's various Christian communities. Harris details the life and thought of one Aloysius Pieris, an influential Sri Lankan Roman Catholic priest and social

activist of the previous century, who it seems was also a champion of inter-religious engagement between faiths as a means of rendering social harmony (Harris 2002: 86). Without specifically identifying inter-religious examples, Hayward nonetheless reports that generally Christians have been at the forefront of contemporary peacemaking activities within Sri Lanka (Hayward 2011: 193).

Accordingly one may expect Christianity in at least some form to be an active component of inter-religious engagement in contemporary Sri Lanka. Yet what could in theory prove problematic here is that Sri Lankan Hindus could have acquired a severe distrust of the island's Christians, resulting from either these rumours being vocalised by political representatives or suffering actual direct experience of harassment by extremist Christian evangelicals. Should this be observable, the patent extension of such could be a hesitance and scepticism on the part of Sri Lankan Hindus to participate alongside their Christian compatriots for fear that they may be harbouring an ulterior agenda of proselytization. Of course such would no doubt be a more pronounced issue for Sri Lankan Hindus if a given inter-religious initiative was directed by or affiliated to a Christian church organisation, as perhaps a perceived dominant role of Christianity within an instance of inter-religious engagement could surely appear more ominous to concerned Hindus, or at least comparatively so than if Christians had a somewhat minor input within proceedings. However with the issue of disreputable proselytization one publically laden with Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist rhetoric, there is also the possibility that any Hindus who've remained unaffected by actual experiences of unethical conversion attempts may conversely simply disregard such accusations as exaggeration, fuelled by the agenda of this parochial political ideology.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter has thus determined that in theory inter-religious engagement has the promising potential to adequately address the conflict of contemporary Sri Lanka regardless of its particular manifestation at any given time. Religion, in enjoying such a close affinity with ethnic communities in Sri Lanka, entails that its representatives are in a prime position from which to begin orchestrating resolution to a conflict which ultimately continues to arise in part from ethnic factionalism. The conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka also features an intra-ethnic dimension, a clash which hinges upon a disagreement over the 'proper' religious element that would holistically complement a genuine Sinhala identity. In either case, the conflict of Sri Lanka is one wherein religious persons of varying beliefs are in positions of influence, and accordingly some might argue, a position of responsibility. For any propitious peace-building approach of this kind to unlock its potential and gain any success of course, it evidently requires faith leaders to locate within their own religious traditions a supposed common set of values which encourages the spirit of reconciliation and the appreciation of the other. As far as Hinduism is concerned, such is not altogether a problematic pursuit. The concept of *ahimsa* can be found embedded at the core of the Hindu tradition within its doctrinal and narrative base, and would perfectly equip Sri Lankan Hindus with all the justification necessary to embark on this particular path toward conflict resolution. However a prospective issue begins to surface once one comes to realise that within the Hindu tradition, the ideal of *ahimsa* is juxtaposed with a seemingly contradictory notion of righteous

violence which forms from the influential orthodox doctrine of *varnāśrama-dharma* and reinforced in popular mythic narrative.

It must be said here however that just because the Hindu textual sources previously explored appear to contain motifs of righteous violence, this does not necessarily mean that contemporary Sri Lankan Hindus would interpret them in such a way that sanctions their own participation in violence. Appleby identifies the 'internal pluralism' of religious traditions, which corresponds to the idea that each encompasses a legacy of resources – such as exemplars, doctrines and symbols – which contains a multiplicity of possible moral and theological positions (Appleby 2006: 31). Religious communities continually revisit this heritage in light of changing circumstances with a view to highlighting aspects as either relevant or redundant to the present situation, whilst the interpretation in each case is likely to be shaped by a complex matrix of 'political considerations, ethnic or national loyalty, or social and economic pressures' (Appleby 2006: 55). A relevant case in point here might be the *Bhagavad Gītā*, in terms of how this text has been normatively interpreted as lionizing Brahminical Hindu ideals, particularly with the famous battlefield dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna appearing to serve as a reminder of the importance of fulfilling the obligations of Kshatriya-*dharma* in politically violent terms (Roy 2012: 31). Nevertheless, 'Mahatma' Gandhi alternatively interpreted the battlefield scenario of Kurukshetra not as a means of sanctifying armed conflict, but as a figurative illustration of the internal struggle between egocentric desires and aspirations of righteous conduct (Robinson 2006: 61). This of course would be consistent with his personal agenda of non-violence as previously discussed. Accordingly, one cannot simply presume firstly that it is inevitable for the textual sources discussed to season

the moral repertoire of Sri Lankan Hinduism, whilst even if it does, one cannot thus assume that they would be interpreted in a fashion that one might straightforwardly expect.

One also has to be mindful that Sri Lankan Hindus are almost unanimously of Tamil ethnicity, which is an ethnic community that has suffered severe discrimination and disillusionment at the hands of its majority compatriot ethnicity which dominates the island's power infrastructure. Ergo one can easily imagine Sri Lankan Hindus forming a reactionary movement or indeed sympathising with it, though perhaps only by proxy as a consequence of their ethnic affiliation. In other words, it may be due to their ethnic association alone that many Sri Lankan Hindus would support Tamil separatism and remain hostile to State authorities. Already then as a result of this, there is a suggestion that Sri Lankan Hindus may not have become so actively involved with inter-religious peace initiatives which could only be seen as antithetical to this opinion as it seeks to foster unity. However Tamils who also consider themselves Hindu would surely be influenced by the values of Hinduism, and given that these could potentially be interpreted to support Tamil separatism and the vilification of the pro-Sinhala ethnonationalist Sri Lankan State, there could theoretically therefore be an even greater resistance from Sri Lankan Hindus to the efforts of inter-religious peace organizations in the contemporary period. In effect then there appears relative obscurity regarding the position that Sri Lankan Hindus would adopt in relation to what is offered by inter-religious peace initiatives. Additionally though, it would appear that another potential impasse regarding the prospects of Sri Lankan Hindus becoming engaged with inter-religious peace

initiatives could be the various antagonisms that have come to exist between the island's religious groups.

With contextual Buddhism encompassing a dimension of haughty religious absolutism, and Christianity having on occasion allegedly pursued evangelisation through dubious and subversive means, there is the concern that Sri Lanka Hindus may have been somewhat hesitant or outright averse to forging associations with Buddhist and Christian representatives in the context of inter-religious engagement. Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict therefore has the potential to be remedied by inter-religious cooperation, yet this approach in itself could be problematic insomuch as it is clearly itself vulnerable to conflict of another kind between religious communities. Moreover, one must also become aware of the executive influence of a particular religious tradition over any given organization which is facilitating the dialogue encounters between religious groups. In my home context of Britain, it seems the case that inter-religious engagement is most frequently a Christian based initiative (Weller 2009: 78). In a much closer environment to Sri Lanka than the UK, India has also been host to efforts at coordinating inter-religious engagement, the majority of which have similarly originated from Christian sources (Robinson 2004: 147). Although Sri Lanka may not necessarily assume this pattern's continuity, it is nonetheless reasonable enough to suppose that any of the organizations fostering inter-religious engagement in Sri Lanka could have emerged from a Christian background. Should this prove the case, then perhaps certain concerns may be raised from within the Hindu community about interacting with these organizations due to fears of an evangelizing agenda concealed beneath proceedings. Accordingly, what follows in the next chapter is a detailed review of the

administrative nature of the four inter-religious peace organizations included within the purview of this research in terms of any religious and political connotations.

Chapter 5 – Sri Lankan Inter-Religious Peace Organizations: An Overview and Hypothetical Arbitration

This chapter will first document four specific inter-religious organizations in Sri Lanka which have been active in the pursuit of conflict resolution, subject to the parameters of this research's chronological scope. Following this, I will conduct an analysis of these with a view to developing the discussion continuing from the previous chapter, which began hypothesizing about the Sri Lankan Hindu community's engagement with inter-religious peace initiatives in anticipation of field data collection. However, where the previous chapter identified certain prospective challenges for the Sri Lankan Hindu community's integration with inter-religious peace initiatives only in a general conceptual sense, it has yet to nuance this by taking into consideration specific organizations contextually facilitating it. Hence the purpose of this current chapter is to enhance the theoretical undercurrent of its predecessor through assessing inter-religious peacemaking in more precise context specific terms, where it has become manifest as Sri Lankan social institutions that are applying the principle in practice.

5.1. A Synopsis of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations Active in Sri Lanka from the onset of Civil War until the Present Day

5.1.1. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

A key agent of inter-religious peacebuilding active within the contemporary Sri Lankan scene would be the 'Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement'[45], due to it enjoying myriad attention from both academic and media sources. The Sarvodaya Movement appears to be the oldest extant initiative fostering the inter-religious approach to conflict resolution within the Sri Lankan national context; hence why it seems to have attracted the majority of scholarly attention paid to any of the movements identified within this chapter. The Sarvodaya Movement began life in 1958 as a charitable agency staffed by urbanised teachers and students led by one Dr A T Ariyaratne, intent on creating a social development scheme to be specifically deployed in rural areas of Sri Lanka (Brooks and Khanal 2009: 12). From the background of those involved in establishing and running the movement, it would be unsurprising that a chief priority of its agenda was the education of rural Sri Lankans, yet in no way were the activities of the Sarvodaya Movement limited to supporting intellectual development in village life. Facilities for improved medical care were put into operation, alongside enhancement strategies targeting economically disadvantaged rural communities, were to become distinctly recognisable as trademarks of the Movement's struggle for betterment in Sri Lankan society (Macy 1983: 27). However these advances in material prosperity are only one of the binary facets by which the Sarvodaya Movement has attempted to improve the quality of life for all Sri Lankan nationals, regardless of professed religion or ethnic attachment. The Sarvodaya Movement is also without a doubt intent on some form of spiritual rejuvenation, which at a glance appears something in the sense of tempering existing perceptions with enhanced virtue (Bond 1996: 129). Coupling economic liberation alongside a

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[45] Which is also commonly referred to as simply the 'Sarvodaya Movement'.

battle for a morality centred spiritual regeneration in this way relates to a particular Indian political philosophy underpinning these desired objectives.

The physicality of the Sarvodaya Movement may be Sri Lankan in origin, but it nonetheless derives its ideological foundation from India. Many prior to hearing of the Sarvodaya Movement may have been familiar with the term '*sarvodaya*' free from any association with a Sri Lankan grassroots social development programme. The term itself was coined by one Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, perhaps better known as 'Mahatma' Gandhi, in the early twentieth century as a title for his own brand of political policy centred upon the ideals of dignified self-determination and communally oriented labour efforts (Bhatt 1982: 87). Gandhi's principles of *sarvodaya*, which being a compound Sanskrit term expressing 'the welfare of all', amounted not only to his own lifetime pursuit of translating these ideals into a reality within his Indian Motherland. Posthumously, Gandhi's own mission was succeeded in disciplic tradition by those close to him who wished to see his aspirations reach the maturity originally intended for them. Out of this grew the original 'Sarvodaya Movement' of the Indian subcontinent in the efforts of Gandhi's philosophical successors, who attempted to originally apply the principles encased in the concept of *sarvodaya* whilst addressing the state of affairs within the humble and impoverished Indian village (Narayanasamy 2003: 15). Already a connection may be observed then between India's Sarvodaya Movement and the more recent Sri Lankan one which is the current focus of this research, in how both began as an outreach to disadvantaged and problematic rural communities in their respective contexts. Yet the link between the forerunning Indian Sarvodaya Movement and the later Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement runs deeper than a mere superficial similarity

in mission objectives. The Sarvodaya Movement of India actually lent itself to becoming the namesake for the later Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement, insomuch as the latter attempted to consciously emulate the former in putting Gandhian principles into action within their immediate surroundings (Bond 1996: 122).

As such, the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka can be perceived as an extension of the original popular movement into a non-Indian context. However just as the Sarvodaya Movement extended from India to the neighbouring nation-state of Sri Lanka, so too has the actual name of this movement been extended by an additional word within this new habitat. The addition of 'Shramadana' to the Sri Lanka rendition of Sarvodaya practice is perhaps telling of yet another allegiance maintained by this specific manifestation in conjunction with Gandhian philosophy. Breaking this term down somewhat essentially cleaves it into the two distinct words of '*shrama*' and '*dana*'. Whilst the former may be rendered into English as 'work or effort', the latter should be understood as referring to a 'generous donation' and is typically associated with the practice of laypeople donating various items to Buddhist renunciants (Chowdhry & Tyndale 2006: 9). Hence a subtly implied association with Buddhism is embedded in this term, and this is furthered by the translation featured on the organisation's website and within the writings of its founder which describes '*sarvodaya*' as having to them the alternative meaning 'awakening for all' as opposed to the traditional Gandhian 'welfare for all' (Ariyaratne 1999b: 70). Awakening of course, possesses inherent Buddhist associations relating to the transcendental experience of *nirvāna*. The Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement's intimate proximity to Buddhism is not only revealed in this most subtle manner, for in fact it is quite blasé about this connection in how it advertises itself as being a movement that is

structured upon a complementary two-fold base of Buddhist and Gandhian principles (Marshall & Van Saanen 2007: 119).

It is this novel affiliation which sets the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement well apart from its Indian cousin, whilst simultaneously aligning it to a relatively modern chapter of Buddhism which appears particularly conscious of a role that the tradition ought to play in addressing various social and political ills. This 'Engaged Buddhism', though it emerged from Chinese thought, would later become systematically consolidated by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. According to the precepts of Engaged Buddhism as is codified by Thich Nhat Hanh, this especially active strand of Buddhist practice involves such commitments as to 'make every effort....to reconcile and resolve all conflicts' whilst also observing the imperatives to 'not kill and not let others kill' and 'to protect life and prevent war' (Hanh 1993: 19 & 21). Thus with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement having been identified as belonging to the Engaged Buddhism phenomenon, there is the suggestion that it too must have become active in the pursuit of conflict resolution. However the Sarvodaya Movement's transition to an agent of conflict resolution was not undertaken in order to conform to some preset doctrine of Engaged Buddhism, but rather what did ensue was that the organisation's directors once confronted with war realised that their integrity with regards to their Buddhist values and mission for social development in Sri Lanka depended upon the maintenance of peace (Hayashi –Smith 2011: 166). It would seem that this adaptation of the Sarvodaya Movement's work with the advent of Civil War in the island of Sri Lanka was implemented with astonishing speed and fervour, with Professor George Bond describing the

organisation as being 'one of the most active groups working for peace in Sri Lanka' (Bond 2006a: 226).

Bond illustrates his point by documenting the various efforts that the Sarvodaya Movement have made in their struggle for realising peace in Sri Lanka. These range from scheduled peace marches across the breadth of the island, founding refugee havens around conflict areas, and the seemingly more frequent mass public meditations and gatherings demonstrating against the violence of the Sri Lankan Civil War (Bond 2004a: 34-35). Hayashi-Smith adds to this, claiming that the Sarvodaya Movement was among the first to respond to the violence which occurred with the onset of the Civil War, providing immediate aid provisions to the wounded and displaced alike, before shortly afterward embarking upon a staunch campaign of condemnation with regards to the escalating carnage of war (Hayashi-Smith 2011: 166). Though any initial attempts to quell the burgeoning violence may not have proven so successful, Sarvodaya continued to campaign for its elimination. Foremost among such attempts was the 'People's Peace Initiative' of 1999 which included a 170,000 strong public march and meditation in response to swelling chaos of the Sri Lankan Civil War, replete with a unity of individuals representing a multitude of faiths (Bond 2003: 131). Despite then a thoroughly Buddhist foundation to the Sarvodaya Movement which continues to be maintained through its founder-leader, it seems impossible to accuse the organisation of allowing this specific religious orientation to encumber bonding with the island's other faith communities. That notwithstanding, it has been observed that certain Hindus, Muslims and Christians in Sri Lanka remain wary of the Sarvodaya Movement due to perceiving it as working in the interests of Sinhala Buddhism (Bond 2004a: 100).

Bond does comment though on how the Sarvodaya Movement have not once suggested that it pursues an end in promoting Buddhism as the religion *par excellence* to which all should aspire to practise. Rather, like so many of their contemporaries associated with Engaged Buddhism such as the current Fourteenth Dalai Lama (Cohn-Sherbok 2001: 72-73), the Sarvodaya Movement adopts an approach to promoting the core ethical values of Buddhism stripped of denominational labels upon the theory that such are universal spiritual truths not unique to any religious creed, but are instead ensconced in them all (Bond 1998: 48). In terms then of progressing towards peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, the Sarvodaya Movement is optimally equipped on this basis for acquiring the strength resulting from inter-religious solidarity. For this reason, King alleges Sarvodaya to be the only group in Sri Lanka which has attained trust from within all ethnic communities (King 2009: 89). However I am not wishing to imply that in the process of externally reducing their Buddhist values to a universally accessible level, the Sarvodaya Movement have in any way diluted the strength of the Buddhist influence upon their mission. With the Sarvodaya Movement being a Buddhist organisation, one would expect it to have gained profuse governmental support, given that the State authorities in Sri Lanka were dominated by Buddhist individuals whose convictions cast a shadow upon their political outlooks and ambitions. Needless to say, the peace-building efforts of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement have not passed unnoticed in the contemporary period by Sri Lankan governmental authorities; although perhaps in contrast to expectations these have been received with a countering smear campaign against personal and professional integrity of the organization and its founder.

The charges levied against the Sarvodaya Movement by the Sri Lankan State at various times have serially included disparaging remarks against the organisation's founder-director in regards to him being allegedly disingenuous in his allegiance to Buddhism and the general welfare of the Sri Lankan people (Bond 2006b: 151). Bond claims that Ariyaratne earned the wrath of the Government through not only his open criticism of State polity – predominately insomuch as they attempted to declare backing from Buddhist teachings – but particularly in how the popular revere in that the organisation had accumulated through its rural development schemes in conjunction with the above became perceived suspiciously as a political threat poised to undermine State authority (Bond 1998: 45). The Sri Lankan State's public critique of the Sarvodaya Movement stems to a large extent from the organisation's involvement in peace making activities. One particular example cited by Bond is when the Sarvodaya Movement joined a brigade of Sri Lankan Tamils in protesting against the violence of the Civil War (Bond 1998: 46). The obvious political spin that could be applied herein is that the Sarvodaya Movement sided with the island's Tamil community in defiance against the legitimacy of State rule, all the while expressing an alleged support for Tamil separatism which also was attempting to destabilize the current socio-political status quo of Sri Lanka. And that was exactly what the Sri Lankan Government under the hand of President Ranasinghe Premadasa did, subsequently branding the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement as an 'enemy of the nation' (Bond 1998: 49).

Despite this hefty governmental resistance to their anti-violence campaigning throughout the Civil War period, the Sarvodaya Movement has nonetheless

weathered the storm, and as a result continues to operate in the island's post-warfare environment. The Sarvodaya Movement's involvement in conflict resolution therefore did not as such grind to a halt with the victory of the Sri Lankan State against the LTTE insurgency. For instance, in September 2012 the Sarvodaya Movement hosted an educational conference and celebration of International Peace Day for Sri Lankan young people with the intention to promulgate the 'values of respect, empathy, responsibility and reconciliation' with a view to transforming Sri Lanka's current 'culture of conflict in to a culture of caring and unity' (Sarvodaya 2013a). Within the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, this transition is referred to as the attainment of 'Individual Awakening', and this understood as a state wherein one as an individual component of society becomes instilled with the spiritual principles necessary to enable one to act harmoniously as part of the larger societal grouping (Macy 1983: 32). Alongside this 'Youth for Peace' programme, the 'Vishva Niketan Peace Centre' is also of note in this regard. The Vishva Niketan Peace Centre is an institution founded and maintained by the Sarvodaya Movement, the objectives of which include the promotion of 'inter-faith, inter-racial, inter-communal, inter-political and inter-state understanding' and sponsoring 'actions that promotes mutual understanding and amity between communities and religious denominations' (Sarvodaya 2013). Interestingly though, the Sarvodaya Movement would come to adopt more of a politically neutral stance later within its evolution, for with the publication of the 'Sarvodaya People's Peace Plan' in 2001, the organization explicitly states that neither the LTTE nor the Government should be considered 'the problem', but rather commits itself to eradicating violence in all of its manifestations (King 2005: 168).

5.1.2. The Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka

Initially conceived in December 2007 and formally founded the following April 28th (Religions for Peace 2009), the 'Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka (IRC-SL)' is a relatively young interfaith forum, though also seemingly one of the most influential. The dates of December 2007 and April 2008 are themselves significant with regards to understanding the formation of this organisation, in that they mirror crucial fluctuations within the confrontation between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka State. It was in the December of 2007 that the government of Sri Lanka was burdened with immense internal pressure to forsake its commitment to an ultimately nebulous ceasefire agreement, which had been internationally mediated by representatives of Norway only five years previous. However, it was not until January 2008 that the Sri Lankan Government would conclusively consolidate on this opinion, and what followed in its wake was a momentous swelling of military advancement towards LTTE lines on the part of the SLA during late April 2008 (Deegalle 2012: 24). Clearly there is the suggestion here that the escalating hostilities between LTTE and the Sri Lankan State provoked the formation of the IRC-SL, as a counter-response to the ominous threat of devastation posed by this resurgence of intense violence. Whilst the aforementioned web article depicts the inception of the IRC-SL as beginning from December 2007, another article from the same source conveys a slightly different picture in stating that the origins of the IRC-SL can be dated as far back as 2002 (Religions for Peace 2008a). This discrepancy can nevertheless be explained away by the fact that talks of founding the IRC-SL can be traced back to 2002, though it seems the suggestion is that it was not until a major gathering of

prospective participants in December 2007 that the idea was really given any breadth. In light of the happenings between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan State in December 2007, it is fairly obvious to speculate on what motivated this momentous convention of concerned religious leaders.

The IRC-SL is by no means an isolated movement bound to a lone national context. On contrary, the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka is an affiliate of the much larger and much older international organisation 'Religions for Peace', or to grant it its official title the 'World Conference of Religions for Peace'. There is the implication on the Religions for Peace website regarding its affiliates, that it is the active agent involved in spawning these movements (Religions for Peace 2013), and so by extension it is deducible that the IRC-SL is therefore built upon an agenda that was imported into Sri Lanka from an external source. The mission of the IRC-SL is ergo, synonymous with that of its parent body, Religions for Peace. Unlike the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement which originated under the supervision of a single man and was to be underpinned by the philosophical tenets of a single faith, Religions for Peace was the fruit of a collective effort during the 1960s of four individuals each of whom differed in religious belief from the other. This all-American ensemble included the likes of a Reform Rabbi, a Unitarian minister, a Methodist Bishop and a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church who began to entertaining the possibility of organising a meeting between senior-most faith leaders on an international scale, with a view to addressing global issues that endangered the stability of intercontinental peace and human wellbeing (Braybrooke 1980: 61-62). Eventually what emerged from this ideal when coupled with sufficient effort was the realisation of the dream in 1970, with the launch of the First Assembly of the 'World Conference on Religion and Peace', the

seminal convening of international religious leaders from a multitude of faith backgrounds united in the pursuit of peace.

The 1970 World Conference on Religion and Peace in Kyoto yielded the agreement that an organisation be established from the proceedings in order to put into motion measures to promote and defend peace within an internationally attuned scope (Braybrooke 1980: 77). The organisation in question was to be the 'World Conference of Religions for Peace', or indeed simply 'Religions for Peace'. From the 'Kyoto Declaration of the First World Assembly', being in essence a manifesto for what would become Religions for Peace, it is quite clear on the means by which the World Conference on Religion and Peace sought to pursue their agenda of international peace-building. Such may be summarised threefold as that of progressing towards disarmament, investing in development schemes and monitoring that the dignity of human rights be upheld (Religions for Peace 1970). In the current incarnation of Religions for Peace, one can easily identify the affecting presence of these three objectives within their associated motto 'Stop War, End Poverty, Protect the Earth'. Now with the establishment of an affiliated appendage of Religions for Peace in Sri Lanka, being in full knowledge of its background organisation, it is likely that the IRC-SL operates on an identical mission basis as does Religions for Peace generally. What this should entail is that the IRC-SL would be committed to resolving conflict, alleviating poverty and protecting the rights of Sri Lanka's citizens. Not long after the formation of the IRC-SL, on June 24th 2008 to be precise, the organisation had managed to procure a meeting with the Sri Lankan head of state President Mahinda Rajapaksa. A statement was prepared on behalf of the IRC-SL that was to be presented to President Rajapaksa, and within it was

contained recommendations forwarded in agreement with the IRC-SL to be heeded by the Sri Lankan Government with regards to conflict resolution and concerns of human rights violations (IRC-SL 2008).

In contrast to the relationship dynamic observable between the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the Sri Lankan State, what seems to be comparatively unique to the one shared between the island's government and the IRC-SL is the apparent willingness of State authority to cooperate with an interfaith organisation attempting to mediate peace. Of course this willingness raises the question of why in one case these attempts were met with hostilities, whilst in the other they were at least tolerated to the extent that the President should afford them some of his valuable time. To take each case at face value does very little to dispel this enigma, for both the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the IRC-SL are so exceedingly similar in their goal to pursue a non-violent path towards effectuating a resolution to the Sri Lankan Civil War. Perhaps it was as Bond proposes, that political anxiety got the better of the Sri Lankan authorities with regards to the Sarvodaya Movement, whose firm grassroots support contributed to it an element of intimidation to the existing power hegemony? This would certainly make sense, at least in the respect that the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement appears to enjoy more popular support than the IRC-SL. In addition however, one should not overlook the international aspect of the IRC-SL due to its affiliation with Religions for Peace having an impact upon governmental perspectives of the organisation and its efforts. Consider for a moment the matter of how the Sri Lankan State attempted to provide justification for a progression towards military retaliation vis-a-vis the LTTE insurrection. Mindful that in the twentieth century political acts are witnessed on a world stage, the Sri Lankan

Government was swift to call upon international legislature to armour-plate its decision as defensibly legitimate to its global audience (Bartholomeusz 2002: 61).

True whilst it is that the Sarvodaya Movement also benefits from international connections, it is the variable scale of such connections that ultimately makes the difference.The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement may have enjoyed support from generally low-key sources external to Sri Lanka, but the key discrepancy between these and those of the IRC-SL is that the latter is of far greater significance inasmuch as international politics are concerned. Unlike the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, the IRC-SL – as an affiliate of Religions for Peace – is by proxy closely allied to the United Nations (Klaes 2003: 222); so much so that it administers its affairs from the UN headquarters in New York City. As such any response by the Sri Lankan State to the IRC-SL has graver political repercussions, than does their reaction to the activities of the largely internalised Sarvodaya Movement. Hence to mete out scorn in much the same manner as they did to the Sarvodaya Movement but instead to the IRC-SL, could potentially lead to severe political and economic penalties that could arise consequently from antagonising the UN. To so tempestuously oppose the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement the way they did, would quite clearly have nowhere near an effect of that calibre. And so what came to be was an appearance of mutual sympathies, manifest as this 24th June 2008 meeting between President Rajapakse and senior figures from the IRC-SL. However despite this effort, the subsequent governmental negligence of IRC-SL's advice exposes this especial tolerance as the superficial token gesture that it always appeared to be. However like the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, the IRC-SL

has maintained a post-Civil War presence in Sri Lanka through which it appears to continue engaging in various peace-building activities.

Within this past year of 2012, IRC-SL had gained notable international attention from the Japanese government, who wished to congratulate the organisation on its efforts towards allaying hostilities between inter-ethnic and inter-religious dimensions of Sri Lankan society (Religions for Peace Australia 2012) This press release referenced above also informs readers of the current size of the IRC-SL, claiming that it now spans 11 of Sri Lanka's 25 administrative districts in terms of localised councils which confluence within the organisation's national level council. Despite an official website laden with self-promotion concerning the supposed success of the IRC-SL within its national context, there appears little which recounts in any great detail the methods underlying these specific triumphs of reconciliation. The most recent report published by Religions for Peace regarding its activities is dated as 2008, although within which it is clearly identifiable that this document was compiled relatively far into the following year as it makes mention of the Sri Lankan Civil War's termination in May 2009. Though this 2008 report includes a section entitled 'Our Work' which does discuss to an extent the input of Religions for Peace in Sri Lanka via the IRC-SL, it nevertheless appears rather vague in terms of its intended further operations in the nation, other than simply stating its readiness to dispense aid in a post-Civil War environ (Religions for Peace 2008b: 11). And so whilst current information as of 2012 suggesting that the IRC-SL continues to engage in praiseworthy peace-building activities in post-Civil War Sri Lankan context, it is yet largely unclear as to what techniques are being employed by this organisation to attain their goal of sustainable contextual peace in the aftermath of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

However it may be helpful here to refer to the work of Klaes, who while in examining the general *modus operandi* of Religions for Peace in the face of contemporary conflict situations, does also delve somewhat into the specific activities of its Bosnian affiliate within a post-war context. What is particularly significant here is that Klaes articulates that such activities of the 'Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina' (abbrev. IRC-BH) became the archetypical process by which Religions for Peace would come to operate in successive contexts (Klaes 2003: 212). In terms then of what precisely the peace-building work of IRC-BH encompasses, fundamentally it seems an address of agitations at both State and 'grass-root' levels. The IRC-BH began the process of healing in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina with an approach that utilized the influence of religious representatives as community authorities to promote sustainably diverse communities at a grassroots level. Yet the IRC-BH also depended on these leaders' social station to pressurize governmental authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina to adjust legislation to cement revised standards of mutual tolerance and cooperation between ethno-religious communities with weighty political charge (Klaes 2003: 210-211). With the activities of IRC-BH then constituting the template upon which further Religions for Peace based initiatives would operate, one can thus safely extrapolate that the approach of the IRC-SL to peace-building in a post-war Sri Lankan context would function in a parallel manner. Already from the very outset of the IRC-SL's foundation during the period of Sri Lanka's Civil War, it is possible to distinguish the organisation as having made an attempt towards conflict resolution at State level, the effectiveness of which being seemingly unconvincing as was previously discussed.

Nevertheless with 2009 heralding a transition into a post-war environment in Sri Lanka and the IRC-SL avowing within its last publicised report to become actively involved in the rehabilitation process towards sincere peace, one can only assume that the so far congratulated efforts of IRC-SL in the arena of post-Civil War peace-building in Sri Lanka would largely resemble those of its sister organisation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Should this prove to be the case, then one could expect the IRC-SL to continue engaging in parlance with the State authorities of Sri Lanka to ensure that their policy reflects Religions for Peace's commitment to justice. In addition to this however, it would also be fair to anticipate the IRC-SL as having adopted a secondary mode of peace-building in Sri Lanka aimed at building sustainable communities through promoting the values of common responsibility and respect at the grassroots of Sri Lankan society between ethnic communities. In response to the latter, Hoole et al highlight IRC-SL as having orchestrated grassroots encounters between ethnic groups under the pretext of constructing communal water tanks (Hoole at al 2013: 106). However with regards to the former, it would seem that the IRC-SL has not maintained its critical dialogue with the Sri Lankan Government. Hoole et al explain this by claiming that the IRC-SL does not wish to appear censorious of the post-war administration due to the risk of arousing the ire of Sinhala ethnonationalists, for the passions of which have supposedly been reignited by the Government since the cessation of the Civil War (Hoole at al 2013: 106).

5.1.3. The Inter-Religious Peace Foundation

My own extensive research on the topic of contemporary inter-religious peace initiatives in Sri Lanka leads to the conclusion that there are relatively few organisations in existence of this kind, with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka appearing to be prominent in this regard. This is evinced by their prevalence in either academic or journalistic writings respectively, and one could even be forgiven on this account for determining them to be the sole agents of inter-religious peacemaking in Sri Lanka. There are however small amounts of information available which would suggest that there are or have been additional initiatives within contemporary Sri Lanka, that have utilised inter-religious engagement as a means of attaining reconciliation among the island's populace. Nevertheless what is most interesting regarding these rare mentions, is that they are just that, scarce in number particularly in contrast to those concerning the Sarvodaya Movement and the IRC-SL. One can of course interpret the relative quiet surrounding such organisations as being indicative of a lack of impact achieved by these bodies in relation to their proposed agendas. This would seem a particularly enticing supposition, given the considerable volume of academic and media attention focused upon the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the IRC-SL; both of which having seemingly contributed significantly to the process of peace-building in Sri Lanka. Yet it is rather simple to speculate, and perhaps even easier to mistake this conjecture for conclusion. It was not clear though why other such inter-religious organisations aside from the Sarvodaya Movement and IRC-SL have received so precious little in the way of academic and media coverage. What was clear though from running inquiries through internet search engines is that these organisations have definitely existed, at least if only for a limited time.

The first of these movements bathed in relative obscurity to come to my attention was the 'Inter-Religious Peace Foundation (IRPF)'. Included within the mentions of the IRPF is an eclectic mix which encompasses the following four sources. First there was a press release from an international NGO dealing in reconciliation and democratic stability, named 'IDEA', who had supposedly partnered with the IRPF on matters of reconciliation in Sri Lanka in April 2005 (IDEA 2005). Secondly there exists an archived *Methodist Recorder* article wherein a senior representative of the IRPF is interviewed on his experiences and perceptions of inter-religious peacemaking in Sri Lanka, dated to February 2009 (Rowley 2009). Thirdly, Frydenlund's report commissioned by PRIO concerning the relationship between Buddhist monastics in Sri Lanka and peacebuilding efforts also mentions the IRPF in terms of briefly explaining the participation of the *sangha* within its activities (Frydenlund 2005: 29). Finally, and perhaps most significantly of this quartet, is an academic paper commissioned by the US-based 'Collaborative for Development Action Inc.' as part of their 'Reflecting on Peace Practice Project' which details in impressive depth the history and activity of IRPF whilst analysing its impact within the realm of peace-building in Sri Lanka (Bilodeau 2000). Note though that the latter of these was published in October 2000, making it the oldest of the quartet. It was particularly interesting that nothing seemed to be said of the IRPF since the termination of the Civil War, and also that the IRPF did not – much unlike the Sarvodaya Movement and the IRC-SL - show any sign of having ever maintained a website dedicated to their cause. This of course begs the question: does the IRPF still actually exist? Moreover in light of this, where could information about its current status be located?

The aforementioned *Methodist Recorder* article contains an interview with one Reverend Anura Perera, a leading representative of the IRPF circa 2009, and so it appeared possible to obtain this information if contact details for this individual could be found. I was able to locate a contact for this Reverend Perera using an international business networking website. From engaging in correspondence with Perera, it was quite clear that the IRPF are still very much in operation within post-Civil War Sri Lanka, as Reverend Perera himself now functions on the organisation's Executive Committee (Personal Communication 2012). Contrary to what might have been suggested then by the omission of an official website in conjunction with an apparent absence from media reports and press releases over the past three years, the IRPF nevertheless continues to exist. This would later be confirmed by Hoole at al's chapter in '*Gods and Arms: On Religion and Armed* Conflict', which is the only academic work that includes a mention of the IRPF to have emerged since the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War (Hoole et al 2013: 106-107). The work of Hoole et al also appears to provide some basic insight as to why there does not seem to be much media coverage or promotional material detailing the activities of the IRPF. Bilodeau reports that the IRPF did not during the Civil War era manage to operate on such a vast scale, primarily it seems due to lack of resources (Bilodeau 2000: 26), whilst Hoole et al remark that this already modest effort has since the cessation of the Civil War suffered from further reduction in output, although the reason for this is left unstated (Hoole et al 2013: 107).

The IRPF is one of the youngest among the extant inter-religious peace organisations in Sri Lanka encompassed within the purview of this thesis. Bilodeau informs us that the 'accepted' date of the IRPF's inception was during 1993, although

it is known that the founding of the organisation was the result of a gradual process beginning with initial meetings that began in 1991 which continued sporadically until 1993 (Bilodeau 2000: 14). In this vein then, the IRPF shares somewhat of a commonality with the IRC-SL in how its essential formation developed over an extended period of time. Another manner in which the IRPF resembles the IRC-SL is as a result of its founding body, unlike the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, lacking religious uniformity. The so-called 'founding fathers' of the IRPF, being those who were responsible for installing the organisation in Sri Lanka from 1991 until 1993, were a largely eclectic group in how they were comprised of two Anglican vicars, a Roman Catholic Priest and a Buddhist monk. Bilodeau notes that prior to embarking on establishing the IRPF, all of the founding religious leaders were individually active in the pursuit of conflict resolution and it was ultimately this mutual concern which inspired them to collaborate in an ecumenical peace-building venture (Bilodeau 2000: 14). Frydenlund interestingly however misrepresents the founding of the IRPF by attributing it to a single Buddhist monk, and even though she does later praise the Reverend Anura Perera, she puzzlingly does so without acknowledging the significant Christian influence on the formation and stature of the IRPF (Frydenlund 2005: 29) which features in the work of Bilodeau. In terms of the methods that the IRPF have employed to combat violence and hostilities in Sri Lanka, from what scarce reference material there is on the organisation it is nonetheless still apparent that the IRPF have approached the task of conflict resolution from a multitude of angles, accessing both political bodies for either side of the Civil War as well as performing grassroots activism and aid (Hoole et al 2013: 107).

Perhaps the most thorough insight into IRPF activities is included in the research of Bilodeau. Bilodeau structures his overview and analysis of the IRPF activities fourfold, containing three direct methods of conflict resolution that have been undertaken executively by the IRPF, alongside a fourth aspect which though affiliated to the IRPF is not directly overseen by the organisation. The first dimension of IRPF peace-building mentioned in Bilodeau's research is the 'Symposium for Religious Leaders (SRL)', which are described therein as concerted discussions between various religious leaders and intellectuals held before public audiences in which religion's role in peace and conflict is contextually discussed, with a view to establishing resultant plans of action to address conflict locally (Bilodeau 2000: 19). An article featured in the *Methodist Recorder*, a weekly UK-based Methodist periodical, also acknowledges the IRPF's SRL programme. However it does so alongside introducing another means by which the IRPF has sought resolution to conflict in Sri Lanka, though it is one which is not specified in Bilodeau's research. Such involves the IRPF maintaining a 'Rapid Response Unit', a group of IRPF representatives which hurry to scenes of violence and provocation in an attempt to alleviate the situation (Rowley 2009). Why it seems that this particular strategy of conflict resolution utilised by the IRPF does not appear in Bilodeau's research is presumably due to the fact that it was a later development which came into use after the publication of Bilodeau's work, for the *Methodist Recorder* article was published nine years after Bilodeau's research for the CDA. The *Methodist Recorder* article also makes mention of a youth engagement initiative through which the IRPF encourages adolescent Sri Lankans of all ethnic and religious background to interact and bond with one another amicably (Rowley 2009).

With a comparative look at Bilodeau's 2000 research and the 2009 *Methodist Recorder* article, it is apparent with the inclusion of the Rapid Response Unit in the latter that the peace-building methods of IRPF have developed within this nine year period. Also testament to this would be the youth engagement initiative identified above, for Bilodeau's research states that it was an aim of the IRPF to develop this aspect of its work following on from the ostensible successes of the 'United Lanka Programme', through which the IRPF engaged Sri Lankan schoolchildren in providing them with a forum to discuss conflict and dispel estrangement and ignorance through dialogue and activity (Bilodeau 2000: 21). In this respect there is evidently a great similarity within the work of the IRPF and the Sarvodaya Movement, in how they've consciously targeted the Sri Lankan youth with an educational agenda which promulgates peaceful values and harmonious interaction across religio-ethnic groups. Yet a possible analogy between the IRPF and the Sarvodaya Movement extends even further than the above similarity, for like the latter the former seems also to possess an interest in the process of rural development. Although not directly an IRPF initiative, the 'Rahuna Praja Kendraya (RPK)' village development scheme is nevertheless intimately tied to and supported by the IRPF; the reason being is that it was instigated independently by Father Rienzie Perera, one of the founding individuals of the IRPF (Bilodeau 2000: 24). From what sparse information there is available on the RPK, it is nonetheless clear that it functions on an identical principle to the Sarvodaya Movement's development outreach mission – that of empowering impoverished and isolated elements of Sri Lankan society through education and economic stability – yet contrastingly it is driven by a Christian value base as opposed to a Buddhist one.

It would seem that the IRPF uses regularly the symposium format for promoting peace in contemporary Sri Lanka. Already this thesis has identified the organisation's SRL programme for stimulating dialogue between religious leaders and the Sri Lankan public with the intention of readying an agenda of localised peace-building activities. There is also evidence that the IRPF has collaborated with an organisation based outside of Sri Lanka which nevertheless has an interest in stabilising peace in the nation – The 'International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance' or 'International IDEA'. This is an intergovernmental organisation based in Stockholm which seeks to assist nations globally in achieving a sustainable democratic infrastructure (IDEA 2013). Interestingly, the International IDEA is also affiliated to the United Nations with it holding 'Permanent Observer' status. With regards to the relationship between the IRPF and International IDEA, the former has assisted the latter in hosting a 2005 symposium in Colombo entitled '*Help or Hindrance? The Role of Religions in the Sri Lankan Conflict*'. It would appear that this symposium functioned on an almost identical paradigm to the aforementioned SRL series, with the event involving a discussion of critical issues followed by deliberation regarding how to practically address the considerations that were highlighted in the preceding dialogue. The primary result of this endeavour was the establishment of an 'inter-faith reconciliation steering group' in which the IRPF would facilitate a meeting inclusive of Sri Lankan religious leaders with representatives of International IDEA, with a view to producing an agenda of inter-religious peace-building activities in Sri Lanka (IDEA 2005).

5.1.4. The Congress of Religion

In contrast with the aforementioned examples of inter-religious organisations having been active in the pursuit of conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka, the next that I am about to discuss differs significantly in a very fundamental manner. The Sarvodaya Movement, the IRC-SL and the IRPF all have their origins in conceptualisation and efforts external to official governmental policy. There is however a unique instance wherein the government of Sri Lanka had sanctioned the formation of an inter-faith organisational body which would bring together representatives of the major religious traditions present in Sri Lanka, seemingly to discuss matters related to harmonious interaction between faith communities. This 'Congress of Religions (COR)' as it came to be called, was formally legitimized by the Sri Lankan polity in March 1970, in accordance with the objectives outlaid within the official '*Congress of Religions Act'*. Article 3 of the *Congress of Religions Act* states that it is within the remit of the Congress of Religions 'to resolve acrimonies and allay suspicion among religious denominations', 'to sponsor action that promotes mutual understanding between religious denominations' and also to 'sponsor action that promotes religious amity based on such mutual understanding' (Congress of Religions Act 1970. s.3a-b). Like the IRPF though, there appeared relatively meagre resources from which to learn much about the COR. However during the process of investigating the COR I became initially reasonably confident that it was still in operation, due to recent press coverage of its activity which can be dated to January 2012 (M Perera 2012).

A month later than the above Asia News article, Jehan Perera – a professional executive involved in the ongoing pacification of ethnic contentions in contemporary

Sri Lanka – published a piece in *Dharma World* magazine which contains a paragraph on the COR. Here, Perera provides a brief glimpse into the work of the COR whilst stating nothing of the circumstances surrounding its formation (J Perera 2012). Jehan Perera's work in *Dharma World* is later expanded upon within a 2013 book chapter in '*Gods and Arms: On Religion and Armed Conflict*' which he co-authored. This remains the only apparent academic source featuring a glance at the COR. Perera describes the COR as being 'perhaps the most prominent' of inter-religious peace efforts in contemporary Sri Lanka (J Perera 2012), an opinion which he reiterates in his later collaborative work (Hoole et al 2013: 104). It seems that the rationale behind this viewpoint is that the membership of the COR constitutes the most senior religious figures within Sri Lanka – the likes of the Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Colombo and the Most Venerable Professor Bellanvila Wimalarathana Thera – and that a composition of this nature has lent the COR the authority to be influential at the highest rungs of the nation's political leadership (Hoole et al 2013: 105). Perera argues that the COR has utilized its eminent standing with Sri Lankan society to lobby the Government with an opposition to the violence of the Civil War (J Perera 2012), however the efficacy of this seems somewhat spurious for obvious reasons. Following the cessation of the Civil War though, it seems that the COR has reinforced its formative link with the Sri Lankan Government by lauding the report of their 'Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission', whilst also avowing to implement unspecified strategic peace-building activities designed around its suggestions (Daily Mirror 2011).

5.1.5. Sri Lankan Inter-Religious Peace Organizations: A Comparative and Theoretical Reflection

Reflecting specifically upon the history of the four Sri Lankan inter-religious peace initiatives discussed here, it is possible to identify an even divide between those which were founded prior to the Civil War, and those which were conceived during. Three of these organisations may also be validly categorised as NGOs, meaning in total there is only a single exception to this pattern, and it remains of interest that two of the three organisations identified here as NGOs receive to a relative extent international endorsement either from the UN itself or from an associated body. On a related note, it has been only these two NGOs with connections to the UN which have remained unscathed by the Sri Lankan Government's critical voice. The Sarvodaya Movement on the other hand, the sole NGO with an absence of UN attachment, has received a heavy-handed backlash from the Sri Lankan State over its work. Of course with examining the Sarvodaya Movement in relation to other organisations of the same type, such ultimately revealed the Sri Lankan Government's reaction toward this particular NGO to be a blatantly hypocritical one. Where the Sarvodaya Movement became demonized for its efforts, the IRPF for example seems to have experienced little or no setback from administrative sources, whilst the President himself amenably agreed to meet with IRC-SL and hear its counsel. There is scarce difference in the work of all three of these NGOs, and so initially it would appear nonsensical to persecute one and tolerate similar others.

Yet to probe deeper into the subtext would be to unveil that the link to the UN that was enjoyed by the IRC-SL and the IRPF is arguably what provided them with

sanctuary from State contempt despite efforts to undermine its policy of war, given the Sri Lankan Government's own frequently obsequious relationship with the United Nations. In terms of the activities undertaken by these organisations in totality as measure for conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka, one can see the full spectrum of models sourced from Appleby's theoretical framework of religious peace-building movements in operation. The model of crisis mobilization for example appears in how the Sarvodaya Movement responded critically to the outbreak of Civil War, whilst the interventionist model is evident in how the IRC-SL approached President Rajapakse in an attempt to maintain a ceasefire in the face of mounting tensions. However what fundamentally unifies all of these NGOs at least is an emphatic application of the saturation model, through implementing educational programmes aimed at transforming harmful perceptions and values to promote a culture of peace through unity. However I have also arrived at the conclusion that Sampson's framework is perhaps the more useful of the two in context, precisely for its inclusion of a fourth model in that of the 'observer' approach to conflict resolution.

An observer model would it seems best describe the orientation of COR which is an extension of Sri Lankan state authority, as it does not satisfactorily correspond to any of the categories of model as proposed in the Appleby framework. Sampson's observer approach to conflict resolution involves an organisation maintaining a presence which is geared towards discouraging conflict whilst also remaining ready to escalate their position to non-passive engagement as the situation necessitates (Sampson 2007: 280). Evidently, the observer role as proposed within the Sampson framework correlates exactly to the behaviour of the COR, the official purpose of which being a presence intended to deter social disunity between Sri Lanka's

religious and ethnic groups. Of course as circumstances demanded, the COR did become more active in their design as is exemplified by how they have uniquely undertaken the responsibility to implement reconciliatory measures proposed by Governmental inquiry. For the most part then, the COR seems rather estranged from the remaining three inter-religious organisations identified within this section, firstly in how it is the only organization here affiliated to the Sri Lankan authorities. In addition the Congress for Religions exclusively occupies a position as an observer model, whereas all other organisations predominately function on the educators/saturation model whilst at times having reoriented themselves to pursue conflict resolution via either the advocate/crisis mobilization model in the case of the Sarvodaya Movement, or the intermediary/intervention models on account of the IRC-SL.

5.2. Adapting Existing Hypothetical Discourse to Accommodate Supplementary Considerations

The previous chapter attempted to justify the hypothesis that though the Sri Lankan Hindu community may well be equipped to participate in inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka, there are nevertheless several potential impasses en route to successfully integrating this particular religious community into the fold of inter-religious peace initiatives. Primarily there was the matter of political affiliation among Sri Lankan Hindus as a result of the ethnic dimension of their identity. Almost the entirety of the Sri Lankan Hindu community additionally share Tamil ethnic identity, and in light of the ethnopolitical struggle in Sri Lanka which amounted to the nation's Civil War, such may become problematic in terms of

incorporating Hindus into inter-religious peace initiatives. I have previously reasoned that, on the evidence that the LTTE was comprised almost wholly of Sri Lankan Hindus, representatives of the Sri Lankan Hindu community may reject involvement for one of two prospective justifications related to identity politics. Firstly Sri Lankan Hindus may have or still continue to support the LTTE or Tamil separatism as an ideology, as a consequence of simultaneously being Tamil and identifying with their aims or agenda. Alternatively however, those Sri Lankan Hindus who do not hold such political sensibilities may have experienced internal pressure from those Tamils within the Hindu community that do profess allegiance to LTTE or Tamil separatism. The fate of Selliah Parameswaran Kurukkal is a profoundly stark example of how sensitive political allegiances evidently are amongst the Sri Lankan Tamil community, and therefore also by extension the Sri Lanka Hindu community given its ethnic composition.

Where the above becomes presently significant to this research, is in relation to the implications of either overt or subtle political orientations of Sri Lankan inter-religious peace organisations, and how these collate with perspectives within the Sri Lankan Hindu community. Having already demarcated the distinction among Sri Lankan inter-religious peace organizations between three NGOs and a single governmental initiative, it is the latter of which that seems on this basis to harbour the greatest potential for being problematic in terms of accessing the Sri Lankan Hindu community in its peace-building labours. This COR is a product of the Sri Lankan State, which also retained an antagonistic role in the Civil War as result of it being permeated by notions of Sinhala ethnic supremacy. In short then, the Sri Lankan State had become a source of grievance for many Sri Lankan Tamils who were in

disagreement with the policy derived from this ethnonationalist ideology, some like the LTTE to the extent of separatist militancy. By proxy then with the Sri Lankan Tamil community suffering as a result of political shifts, so too was the Sri Lankan Hindu community perturbed at least to a certain extent. Such is what clearly drew certain Sri Lankan Hindus into siding with Tamil separatist movements, and there have therefore been Hindus in Sri Lanka who have adopted a position in vehement opposition to the Sri Lankan State and what it represents. As such it is possible to argue that the Sri Lankan Hindu community, or at least those who support the ideals of Tamil separatist and its expostulation to the Sri Lankan state, would tend to harbour negative perspectives or avoid participation in the activities of the COR because of its close approximation to the Sri Lankan Government.

Considering also any within the Sri Lankan Hindu community who would not place their support with Tamil separatism, perhaps even they may discover themselves in a potentially compromising situation should they choose to interact compliantly with any peace-building work conducted by the COR. Again one must be reminded of the Hindu priest Selliah Parameswaran Kurukkal, as the reason for his assassination is ostensibly linked to his complaisant attitude towards Sri Lankan state authorities. Whilst I've previously discussed the notion of politicized pressure from within the Sri Lankan Hindu community potentially impacting upon otherwise willing individuals' ability to participate in inter-religious peace initiatives, I would argue that this pressure increases exponentially with regards to the prospective engagement with the COR due to the organisation's political subtext. Furthermore, in the post-war environment where the influence of Tamil separatism may be lessened due to the unravelling of the LTTE, it must be acknowledge that there are Tamils – and so quite

possibly Hindus – who have since the end of the Civil War become critical of the COR for its support of the Government's LLRC, arguing that this furthers State propaganda by unduly polishing the Government's image and misrepresenting civilian casualty data (Hoole et al 2013: 105).The remaining three inter-religious peace organisations that have been identified in the course of this research though are unlike the COR, to varying extents estranged from the Governmental authorities in Sri Lanka. However this should not guarantee that contrastingly these organisations should be initially conceived of as being free from theoretical complications with regards to procuring the support and involvement of the Sri Lankan Hindu community.

Whilst there is undoubtedly a significant political element within the potential hindrances burdening the Sri Lankan Hindu community's integration into inter-religious peace initiatives, there are in addition difficulties associated with strained relationships between Sri Lankan Hindus and a number of the island's other religious communities. The previous chapter of this thesis determined the sagacity of the expectation that any Buddhist and Christian input into inter-religious peace organisations could prove to be problematic for Sri Lankan Hindu engagement with such bodies. Where this chapter has identified the various interfaith groups at work towards conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka, there is evidently a strong Buddhist and Christian presence amongst these organisations. I am of course here referring with particular direction towards the Sarvodaya Movement and the IRPF, for although the IRC-SL as an appendage of Religions for Peace is thus indirectly a product of predominately Christian individuals, the IRC-SL would not appear to merit the distinction of being a 'Christian' organisation on the grounds that it does

broadcast or structure itself in any such way that divulges any explicit Christian undertones. Perhaps the protracted legacy of Religions for Peace has ensured that the organisation has developed to such a degree that its now myriad ecumenical infrastructure has in essence masked these largely Christian roots? The Sarvodaya Movement, and to a lesser extent the IRPF, do on the other hand possess opaque primary religious affiliations, with the former of these consciously owing its existence to the Buddhist tradition. The IRPF is somewhat less straightforward in its religious associations than the former, for unlike the Sarvodaya Movement, this organisation resulted from efforts of a cluster of individuals who though mainly Christian, nevertheless were in partnership with a Buddhist monk whilst forming the IRPF.

As such one may perceive the IRPF as a Christian-Buddhist based organisation, although the Christian influence within the organisation appears much stronger than any Buddhist component in for example how the IRPF supports an allied economic development scheme which is overtly Christian in its rationale. Despite then the technical distinction between the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the IRPF in being either respectively a Buddhist or a Christian-Buddhist derived organisation, what is nevertheless common to both of the above is that either variant of these religious attachments could pose the potential to impair the integration of the Sri Lankan Hindu community into the work of these organisations. Drawing from the previous chapter of this research, note that relationships between the Sri Lankan Hindu community and their Buddhist and Christian compatriots have become strenuously overwrought for various reasons during the nation's recent history. However any trepidation over cooperating with Buddhist organisations may become counteracted in the case of the Sarvodaya Movement, whose vocal damning

critiques of the Sri Lankan State alongside positive engagement with the island's displaced and wounded Tamils immediately from the onset of the Civil War, could safely distance them from certain negative depictions of Buddhists circulating amongst the Sri Lankan Hindu community as a result of fundamentalist trends. However Bond nevertheless disclosed that there are some Hindus who regard the Sarvodaya Movement with suspicion due to its Buddhist background and oversight (Bond 2004a: 100). Yet with regards to the IRPF, there appears no available source which would suggest that this organisation has been received in Sri Lanka as correspondingly iconoclastic as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. Therefore a presupposition that the IRPF may encounter negative perceptions from or difficulties in incorporating the Sri Lankan Hindu community into their peace-building work as a consequence of the organisation's religious connotations duly remains fair.

5.3. Conclusion

When one considers in totality the impact of certain political and social pressures as identified above bearing upon the contemporary Sri Lankan Hindu community insofar as their interaction with contextual inter-religious peace organisations is concerned, it is possible to construct a hypothesis which projects a relative variance within the degree of interaction between the Sri Lankan Hindu community and each of the inter-religious peace organisations at the focus of this research. Political strife between Sri Lankan Tamils and the island's State authorities could in theory entail that the Sri Lankan Hindu community's involvement with the COR would suffer as a result. Additionally, certain inter-religious contentions between Sri Lankan Hindus

and their neighbouring Christian and Buddhist communities could negatively affect the Hindu participation with and perceptions of organisations such as the Sarvodaya Movement and IRPF, who are intimately linked to one or both of these religious traditions. However the Sarvodaya Movement also has the potential to bypass this theoretical effect in how it has prospectively proven itself to be in contradistinction to those ethnonationalistic Sinhala Buddhists whom have upset relations with Sri Lanka Hindus. The IRC-SL then appears to be the most neutral of these inter-religious peace organisations in how they lack any potentially disconcerting political and religious affiliations in the perceptions of Sri Lankan Hindus. It would therefore be unsurprising to discover in the course of this ensuing data collection that the Sri Lankan Hindu community would favour engagement with the IRC-SL over that of the other specified organisations, with the COR being likely to receive much less Hindu participation in its work than all other organisations listed.

In terms of any likely distinction to be visible between the ethnonationalist conflict of the Civil War and post-war ethnic conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka that lay within the scope of this research, it is evident that one may expect certain potential contentions befalling the Hindu community's integration into inter-religious peace initiatives to be more pertinent during one period than the other. The aforementioned issues connected to tentative inter-religious relations amongst Sri Lanka religious communities are ones which appear to be consistently present throughout the contemporary period during both the Civil War period and its aftermath. However the notion of internal political pressure theoretically exerted upon the Sri Lanka Hindu community from certain adherents who've also sympathised with either the LTTE or the general ideals of Tamil separatism, is nevertheless one which could presumably

vary in potency relative to the variation of conflict at hand. During the ethnonationalist period of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka which was the nation's Civil War, the presence of the LTTE at peak stature surely exudes a stronger comparative influence than in the successive return to pure ethnic conflict where Tamil separatist ideology appears no longer reified as an organised and efficient military force. True though it seems that the sentiments of Sri Lankan Tamil separatism continue to linger within the current post-war context, without the existence of a mature organisation or movement such as the LTTE at its fore it seems a cogent supposition to speculate that any pressure levied upon the Sri Lankan Hindu community to abstain from cooperating with inter-religious peace initiatives would be lessened with fragmentation and surrender of the LTTE and the cessation of ethnonationalist conflict.

With the conflict then of contemporary Sri Lanka transitioning thereafter into a phase of pure ethnic conflict, representative authorities of the Sri Lanka Hindu community who would otherwise support the aims of inter-religious peace-building would undoubtedly be at great liberty to do so, arising as a result of diminished fear that doing so would procure reprisal from Tamil separatist militants. Accordingly, it may thus be unveiled in this upcoming data yield that Hindu involvement within Sri Lankan inter-religious peace-building organisations would have increased since the shift of conflict dynamics following the conclusion of the Civil War. The following chapter constitutes the beginning of my field data analysis, which addresses two of the four thematic categories. Specifically, this will involve examining primary interview data to firstly determine levels of awareness of inter-religious peace initiatives, as well as uncovering the range of perspectives concerning both individual

organizations and the general utility of this approach to resolving conflict in a contemporary Sri Lankan context. Secondly, participant experiences with inter-religious peace organizations will be noted and assessed in terms of perceived benefits. In relation to this present chapter, such will allow me to gauge if the religious or political affiliations of any of the four inter-religious peace organizations has impacted upon the prospects of Hindu involvement.

Chapter 6 – Awareness and Experiences of Inter-Religious Peace-Building among Sri Lankan Hindus, and their Perspectives of its Efficacy and the Organizations which have Facilitated It

With the previous two chapters having established an extensive rationale behind the four hypothetical impediments potentially negating affirmative Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka, this present chapter marks a transition into the analysis of the field research in order to demonstrate their precision according to the methodology presented in Chapter 2. Within Chapter 2, it was noted that such data would be analysed thematically so as to correspond to the four research questions contained therein, that were themselves derived from the four hypotheses aforementioned. Accordingly, with the field data analysis spread across Chapters 6, 7 and 8, each chapter will address a single theme, with the exception of the current which will instead consider two, in an order mirroring the descending listing of the research questions. Thus this chapter is concerned firstly with participant familiarity with inter-religious peace initiatives whilst determining their perspectives concerning the efficacy of this approach to contextual conflict resolution, and gauging the impact of certain religious and political affiliation. Subsequently, this chapter will then explore participant experiences of involvement within inter-religious peace initiatives, as well as the prospects for any future engagement.

6.1. Sri Lankan Hindu Awareness and Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations in terms of Efficacy and Religious or Political Affiliation

In an attempt to measure awareness of inter-religious peace initiatives amongst Sri Lankan Hindus, Interview Question Two asked participants if they were familiar with any of the four significant inter-religious peace organizations that are active on a national scope. Note that 'awareness' in this sense was in every case more than simply recognizing the name of an organization, for it also entailed that participants were variably conscious of a further array of details including founding or leading figures and activities[46]. All twenty-eight participants claimed to be aware of the oldest of these organizations, the Sarvodaya Movement. However of the twenty-eight total participants, only eleven (38%) claimed to be aware of the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation (IRPF), whilst only three (11%) stated that they were aware of the Congress of Religions (COR). Interestingly not a single participant possessed awareness of Religion for Peace derived Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka (IRC-SL). There now follows the question of how to interpret the meaning of this data pattern. Perhaps initially one might suggest that levels of awareness depend upon degree of activity, and so the superior level of awareness enjoyed by the Sarvodaya Movement may be simply a matter of hosting more events or sponsoring more activities than the others. However I would argue this is a somewhat unconvincing proposition, given that information documented in Chapter 5 clearly evidences that other organizations have been highly active in their pursuits of conflict resolution, whilst comparatively there seems nothing to suggest that the efforts of the Sarvodaya Movement are quantitatively predominant.

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[46] For instance, every participant claiming knowledge of the Sarvodaya Movement was aware of the village development schemes and 'peace walks' referenced in Chapter 5.

Another postulation that may explain this representation pertains to scale of activity, meaning that the Sarvodaya Movement's activities could have had more of a significant impact than those of other organizations. Again however, it is problematic to entirely accept this notion given that Chapter 5 demonstrates that its activities have been similar to that of the IRPF. In addition, if such were the case would not participants actually have been aware of the IRC-SL? The IRC-SL has not only been the sole organization here to have engineered a high-profile consultation with Mahinda Rajapakse regarding peace maintenance, but they have also received official praise from Yoshishiko Noda, the former Prime Minister of Japan, during his tenure in office (Religions for Peace Australia 2012). Whilst the former is a significant achievement in itself that was not achieved by either Sarvodaya Movement or the IRPF, the latter implies that the IRC-SL's catalogue of achievements must have been of great value for them to have warranted international praise. Yet if it is not then a matter of variance in quantity or scale of their work, how can one articulate such disparity in the awareness of Sri Lankan Hindus regarding inter-religious peace organizations? I would argue instead that the responses of interviewees are fundamentally related rather to the nature of the activities undertaken by these organizations. In order to begin elaborating upon this assertion, one must first be reminded of the relationship between Sri Lankan Hindus and conflicting parties. The first question asked of participants established ethnic identity, and all twenty-eight participants claimed Tamil ethnicity. In being Tamil, participants thus identified themselves with a macro-community that transcends yet envelops their religious belonging. The Tamil community, not specifically Hindu but inclusive of them, was one which was at the forefront of the contemporary conflict in Sri Lanka.

Chapter 5's examination of Sri Lanka's national inter-religious peace organizations discovered that the evidence available portrays the Sarvodaya Movement and IRPF as distinct from the IRC-SL and the COR, in that they took a proactive 'hands-on' approach to dealing with individual instances of violence associated with the greater conflict narrative. The Sarvodaya Movement and the IRPF it seems were both involved in refugee care and victim aid, with the former being one of the first presences on the scene to lend support to those affected by the violence (Bond 2006a: 226). I would suggest that this interactive presence among the ethnic macro-community to which Sri Lankan Hindus are affiliated, has afforded these two organizations greater general recognition than the others. Yet while this may explain greater participant awareness of the Sarvodaya Movement and the IRPF combined over that of the two other organizations listed, it does not account for the additional disparity between levels of participant awareness of the Sarvodaya Movement (100%) and the IRPF (38%). What may however most likely explain this discrepancy is a difference in the public political stance of each organization. The IRPF remained relatively politically neutral in that it did not appear to vocalise condemnation of the Sri Lankan Government, whilst such did become a notorious characteristic of the Sarvodaya Movement. As described in Chapter 5, Government counter-action against the Sarvodaya Movement's indictments involved a very public depiction of them as allies of Tamil separatism so as to designate them to the majority populace as an 'enemy of the people'. In conjunction then with Sarvodaya Movement's intimate involvement in damage control during instances of violence, the Government's manipulation of media sources to publically denounce the Sarvodaya

Movement perhaps could have ensured that public awareness of it exceeded that of the other inter-religious peace organizations here concerned.

6.1.1. Participant Rejections of Specific Inter-Religious Peace Organizations

To now address the aspect of the current theme pertaining to Sri Lankan Hindus' perceptions of inter-religious peace organizations, it would seem further clarification here would be necessary. Such 'perceptions' were identified in terms of testing the theory earlier expounded in Chapter 5, regarding whether the religious or political affiliation of inter-religious peace organization would affect participants' opinions of these organizations, and therefore their willingness to cooperate with them. In order to extract an answer of this kind, Interview Question Eight asked participants if they would be particularly unwilling to work with any of the inter-religious peace organizations that they were aware of. A majority 61% of participants answered a direct 'no', with 100% of these participants claiming awareness of the Sarvodaya Movement, 6% reporting aware of the COR, and 65% being aware of the IRPF. In addition to this, 39% of total participants replied that though they currently had no reason to reject any particular organizations, they would nonetheless suspend conclusive judgement on this until they were able to consider feedback from trustworthy individuals with experiences of working with them – with 100% of these participants being aware of the Sarvodaya Movement and 18% claiming awareness of the IRPF. The remaining 11% did however reply that they would be specifically averse to participating with a particular inter-religious peace organization, with both of these participants similarly stating that they would wish to consciously avoid

participation with the COR. In summary then of total participants, all who were aware of the Sarvodaya Movement and the IRPF either principally professed no reservations about these organizations, or simply did not know enough of them to comment. Yet with regards to those aware of the COR, 67% claimed that they would avoid participation with this organization.

The first note of consideration pertaining to this data is that the non-Hindu religious connotations relating to the oversight or origins of inter-religious peace organizations appear to make little difference to the prospects of Hindu involvement, despite what was theoretically projected in Chapter 5. Of course drawing such a conclusion one ought to accommodate the possibility that participants may not be conscious of these details, despite nonetheless claiming a relative familiarity with organizations. For example, could not participants be aware of the actions orchestrated by the Sarvodaya Movement whilst remaining unaware that its efforts are governed by those with Buddhist religious affiliation? Perhaps initially such may seem a viable possibility, yet on closer inspection it would appear doubtful that participants would likely have been ignorant of this information. In essence my argument here rests upon the assertion that the religious undertones of these organizations are in no way obscured from public transparency, and that the proximity of many participants to organizations would have anyway ensured that they had significant knowledge and exposure to them. With regards to the latter point here, regard how almost half of the participants (47%) that were aware of the Sarvodaya Movement and appeared to have no particular misgivings about cooperating with them had in fact participated to some extent in the Sarvodaya Movement's peace work. Surely in the process of becoming this closely acquainted with the Sarvodaya Movement, participants would

have come to an understanding that this organization is directly influenced by Buddhist individuals and values, and yet clearly, this did not present an impediment to their participation.

However these findings ought not to suggest that Hindu-Buddhist relations in Sri Lanka are entirely cordial, and would present no challenge to orchestrating inter-religious cooperation. Consider how Chapter 5 has previously demonstrated how the Sarvodaya Movement had gained significant public attention through its condemnation of the Sri Lankan Government, and also through the Government's own derisive counter-campaign against the organization. This research had also in Chapter 5 described that Sarvodaya Movement's open critique of the Government was proffered from a Buddhist standpoint, and as such the association between the Sarvodaya Movement and Buddhism would have become widely observed. In conclusion then it would appear that the religious associations of the Sarvodaya Movement at least had little impact in terms of negatively distorting Hindu perceptions of this organization. I would also suggest here the possibility that any potential negative sentiments shared amongst Hindus related to the Sarvodaya Movement's Buddhist undercurrent would likely have been offset primarily by this organization's quarrelling with the Sri Lankan State. Such would have distanced 'Sarvodaya Buddhism' from the Sinhala-nationalist imbued kind, which has obviously been a grievance for Sri Lankan Hindus during the modern period. Concomitantly it is possible also that the Sarvodaya Movement's appropriation of Gandhian philosophy entailed that this disparity between 'Buddhisms' was further emphasised, as well as it providing an avenue of relatability for Sri Lankan Hindus who could find a source of trust in this. And yet while it seems so far as the Sarvodaya Movement is

concerned, the essential religious affiliation of inter-religious peace organizations appears to have not repelled participants, could the same be said of the IRPF?

Admittedly much fewer participants professed awareness of the IRPF, ostensibly due to it lacking a significant media presence for reasons previously discussed, compared to those with knowledge of the Sarvodaya Movement, though for those who were aware of the IRPF, the organization's predominantly Christian background appeared rather blatant, although this was not identified as being problematic. Furthermore, from the lone participant who had been involved in the work of the IRPF, it is clear that any Christian overtones achieved little in the way of discouraging his participation, for as was the case with the participants who had worked with the Sarvodaya Movement, at this proximity it is almost inevitable that this individual would have become aware of such details. The hypothetical discourse in Chapter 5 is once again to some extent contravened by this data, as I had expected results to display negative perceptions of the IRPF among Sri Lankan Hindus due to their Christian associations. Perhaps then inter-religious relations in Sri Lanka are to be regarded as less problematic than initially conceived? However to affirm this presently would be to rely upon the testimony of a single interviewee, and as such would be a highly precarious conclusion. Nevertheless with discussion of Hindu-Christian relations being central to the final theme of this analysis in Chapter 8, such will shed light upon why in fact the Christian undertones of the IRPF would have appeared generally benign to Sri Lankan Hindus. Whilst any religious connotations of inter-religious peace organizations appeared from the research data to exert little negative bearing upon Hindu perceptions of them, it would seem that political affiliation on the other hand possesses the evident potential to do so.

Of the three participants who reported to be aware of the COR, two confirmed that they would refrain from any participation in the work of this organization for essentially identical reasons. Participant 2 for one responded that they 'would not trust anything arranged by the Congress of Religions because they are friends of the ruling regime who only want to control and not make peace' (P2/2013/WP), whilst Participant 10 stated that they 'would be wary of the Congress for Religions because they are directed by the government and so would not really work for Tamil interests' (P10/2013/WP). From these responses it is clear that this rejection of the COR is due to a perceived clash in political allegiances, with Participant 10 patently alluding to a personal orientation towards Tamil ethnonationalist politics. In fact later within this interview, Participant 10 also disclosed their sympathies with the LTTE struggle in particular as part of a general support of Tamil separatism (P10/2013/WP). Participant 2 similarly claimed they had supported the general aim of Tamil separatism as a defence against alleged minority discrimination (P2/2013/WP). In their view, this organization that had been formed and continues to be administered by the Sri Lankan Government is not worthy of assistance because they perceive its proclivities to be subversive to attainment of peace, by seemingly claiming that it is partisan to a parochial agenda. By way of its close affiliation to the Sri Lankan State, these participants appear led to presume that the COR is itself coloured by the Sinhala ethnonationalism that has permeated Governmental circles in Sri Lanka since its independence.

However the veracity of this purport is challenged by the testimony of Participant 22, who also claims to be aware of the COR, yet did not profess any particular distrust or

contempt towards them (P22/2013/WP). Unlike Participants 2 and 10, Participant 22 is clear in their disassociation with the LTTE and Tamil separatism where they stated 'I have never supported them or this mission to break away from the Sinhala' (P22/2013/WP). The disparity in political persuasion between Participant 22 and Participants 2 and 10, suggests that the latter's aversion towards the COR may be rooted more in hypothetical supposition, rather than any concrete observation. Participant 2 and 10's ostensible support for Tamil nationalist politics could have amounted to *a priori* disdain of the COR, due to this organization's foundational link to the 'enemy' of Sri Lankan Tamil ethnonationalism, namely the Sri Lankan Government. Participant 22 conversely, who does not seem to subscribe to the same political ideology, has provided no comment against the legitimacy of the COR. Nevertheless, with Participants 2 and 10 proclaiming support for Tamil separatism whilst disputing the sincerity of the COR without so much as an anecdote in support, one would naturally be inclined to relegate their criticisms to speculative presumptions engendered by biased political sentiments. As far as this data yield is concerned then, the perception of inter-religious peace organizations amongst Sri Lankan Hindus does not appear at all to be negatively affected by any religious nuances. However there is scope to suggest that political sensibilities and affiliations can lead to certain organizations appearing as dubious to Sri Lankan Hindus, therefore discouraging participation and confirming to an extent the hypothetical considerations of Chapter 5.

6.1.2. The Potential Efficacy of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations

In terms of participants' perceptions of whether or not inter-religious cooperation could be considered a useful tool for conflict resolution in Sri Lanka, there were three distinct general trends within responses. Participant feedback to Interview Question Nine[47] seemed to trifurcate into answers which expressed either a noncommittal ambivalence towards the efficacy of inter-religious peacebuilding, a frank scepticism of its utility, or indeed an optimistic affirmation of its potential. As such during the process of refining the data pertaining to this question, I began classifying participant responses to this question into the categories of 'ambivalent', 'sceptical' and 'optimistic'. Statistically speaking, the largest group trend was those who represented the optimistic category at 43%. Answers typical of those designated as optimistic include 'In a conflict such as this it is extremely useful because these people listen very closely to religious leaders' (P4/2013/CP), 'It is seriously important because if we are not together, we are strangers, and it is easy to kill a stranger' (P28/2013/WP), and 'It is the only way for peace here, as we need to begin becoming one equal nation that accepts differences' (P16/2013/NWP). Participants belonging to the optimistic category then seem confident in inter-religious peace efforts because it is perceived as a means of unifying disparate communities in Sri Lanka. The inference of such an opinion is that in the views of these participants, the root cause of conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka may be attributed to factionalism between compatriot communities. In stark contrast to those in the optimistic category, 25% of remaining participants were delineated as 'sceptical' as they seemed doubtful that inter-religious efforts could contribute anything of value to peace in Sri Lanka.

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[47] Which asked 'How important do you consider inter-religious action to be with regards to building and maintaining peace in Sri Lanka?'.

Examples of sceptical responses include 'It is not the right solution to what this conflict is about. A political issue needs a political solution, and so change can only come through government decisions' (P2/2013/WP), 'I wonder if it can work because it did not stop the war and it cannot bring the dead back to life' (P23/2013/NWP), and 'It will not work here. So many Sinhala Buddhists have shown that they do not want to live together in peace' (P5/2013/CP). The first of these responses seems to indicate that this participant would not agree with the optimistic trend that conflict in Sri Lanka is fundamentally an issue of social divides, but is instead arguing that conflict is a result of unpopular government policy causing unrest. Accordingly the suggested remedy for such a situation would be to adjust the State to a point where greatest contentment could be rendered. My research into the conflict of contemporary Sri Lanka would justify both of these positions to an extent, although ultimately arbitrating the optimistic trend as possessing the greater insight into the situation. It is true that prominent elements of government policy have had an inflammatory effect, such as the Sinhala Only Act, yet such policy nonetheless had arisen from Sinhala nationalist ideology – an ideology which was birthed and is sustained by societal fracture[48]. As such to allay these incendiary political aspirations, one has to first dissipate Sinhala nationalism, and this is arguably best achieved through dismantling its foundations (i.e. the voting masses which sustain its political authority). With its foundations then resting upon social disunity, if one were to overcome such divisions, then surely this would have terminal consequence for the entire power structure of Sinhala ethnonationalism in Sri Lanka. The theory of inter-religious peace efforts, as expounded in Chapter 4 of this thesis, would

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[48] As was explained within Chapter 3.

certainly concur that a strength of this approach to conflict resolution is within its potential to overturn hostile factional boundaries.

Not only then does this sceptical opinion appear limited in its understanding of conflict mechanics in contemporary Sri Lanka, but I would argue that the optimistic trend seems relatively justified at this point in defending the efficacy of inter-religious peacebuilding. However participants who answered according to the sceptical category did not solely reject the expediency of inter-religious peace efforts on terms related to its incompatibility with the nature of conflict in Sri Lanka. Rather some participants allege that inter-religious peacebuilding is fatally undermined by significant opposition from certain areas of Sri Lankan society who wish to remain belligerent. Participant 5's response stated above claims inter-religious peace efforts will inevitably to fail because 'so many Sinhala Buddhists have shown that they do not want to live together in peace' (P5/2013/CP). Participant 12 similarly replied that these 'would not work because lots of Sinhala do not want to live with us. They say we are foreigners in this land and have no right to be here' (P12/2013/CP). Evidently this would suggest that there is the sense among some Sri Lankan Hindus that there are many from within the Sinhala community who would rather exacerbate conflict than resolve it; or at least enough that they would exert a significant enough influence that any attempt to absorb the Sinhala community into proceedings would be insufficient. It seems somewhat obvious that this characterization of the Sinhala community is a consequence of the prevalence of ethnonationalism in contemporary Sinhala politics, because the notion that the Sinhala do wish to live equitably

alongside other ethnic groups in Sri Lanka is one which has been consistently implicit within Sinhala ethnonationalism[49].

Perhaps then the influential presence of ethnonationalism amongst contemporary Sinhala politicians gave rise to the impression that it commands considerable support from within the Sinhala community. Yet if one is led to assume this, as some participants seem to be, then surely the perceived prospects of inter-religious peace efforts would be strongly diminished. In other terms, how can communities be brought together to work for peace if the largest among them is pervaded by an ideology which seems antithetical to balanced cohabitation? The answer of course would depend largely upon the relative strength of Sinhala ethnonationalism within the Sinhala community. A final further branch of the sceptical category seems to result from a perceived legacy of failure, for in the words of Participants 21 and 23 respectively, 'I think it has proven that it doesn't have much to offer because it did not stop any of the killing' (P21/2013/WP) and 'I wonder if it can work because it did not stop the war and it cannot bring the dead back to life' (P23/2013/NWP). Given that the Sri Lankan Civil War did not reach a peaceful conclusion despite the efforts of inter-religious peace organizations, alongside the continued ethnic tensions, it is understandable that participants would develop this perspective against its usefulness. Mediating the optimistic and sceptical trends within the data is the 'ambivalent' category, which as the name would suggest, is neither particularly confident nor critical of the ability of inter-religious peacebuilding. Answers supporting the ambivalent trend include Participant 6 who commented that 'Religious leaders are very influential here, but a lot of them are in support of violence, both

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[49] Please refer to Chapter 3 of this thesis for supporting details.

Buddhist and Hindu. For this reason it is hard to know if it can be useful' (P6/2013/WP), and Participant 26 who remarked 'I'm not sure if it can be as successful as it should be, because there are few people in power that take much notice of what they are saying' (P26/2013/WP).

Responses falling into the ambivalent category seem to ground this uncertainty in recognising a dichotomy between the potential of and the aversion to inter-religious peace efforts, whilst seemingly estimating them to be of equivocal capacities. Participant 6 for example alludes to this dichotomy within religious communities (P6/2013/WP), whilst Participant 26 identifies a similar contention that exists in society at large (P26/2013/WP). Ambivalent answers then seem to accept that inter-religious peace efforts do possess the potential to effectively contribute to conflict resolution; however, they nonetheless recognize that such efforts face considerable opposition from influential sources in both political and religious contexts. Whereas though sceptical answers also seemed to acknowledge the threat of sizeable opposition to the works of inter-religious peace organizations, it would appear that participants who answered in ambivalent terms contrastingly do not estimate this opposition to be insurmountable. Hence ambivalence is alternatively attained within some participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. Related to participants' understanding of the worth of inter-religious peace efforts in Sri Lanka, is their understanding of the impact Interview Question Ten, which asked of participants whether or not they believe inter-religious peace efforts have so far had any significant impact in resolving conflict in Sri Lanka. Again there was no total uniformity amongst participant responses, though the preponderant trend seems to indicate that participants perceived the efforts of inter-

religious peace organizations as having been so far either largely inconsequential or inadequate. Such an opinion accounts for 64% of all participants, whereas only 32% considered these organizations as having attained some significant degree of success. A single participant, Participant 24, admitted that they were uncertain of their successes (P24/2013/NWP).

6.1.3. The Observed Efficacy of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations

Of the eighteen participants who in their responses to Interview Question Nine were critical of the successes of inter-religious peace organizations in Sri Lanka, it would seem that a prevailing reason underlining this perspective was their apparent lack of executive influence within Sri Lankan society, according to responses to Interview Question Ten[50]. For example, Participant 11 stated that 'Sarvodaya was very active during the war, but a lot of Sinhala people and the Government did not want to listen to them' (P11/2013/WP), and Participant 12 answered 'These organizations have tried, but the government will not listen. They have called them terrorists too' (P12/2013/CP). Participant 14 also shared this opinion because during the Civil War 'neither side would listen because of their hatred for each other' (P14/2013/NP). Participant 14 though, unlike Participants 11 and 12, claimed that both 'sides' of the conflict were problematic in dismissing these organization; that is, both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. Regardless though, the predominant trend amongst participants sharing this perspective is one that solely blames the Government and/or the Sinhala Buddhist community, with Participants 6, 11, 12, 19 and 26

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[50] Which asked 'How successful do you believe efforts to facilitate inter-religious interaction have been so far in the process of conflict resolution in Sri Lanka?'.

subscribed to this view. On the other hand only Participants 14, 18 and 26 placed equal blame upon the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE for opposing these organizations. Previously in this chapter, this same observation had been identified as an issue which had caused participants to question the efficacy of inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka, either to the point of scepticism or ambivalence. Clearly then not only is this supposed general governmental disinterest in inter-religious peace efforts a major reason as to why participants doubt the instrumentality of inter-religious peace organizations, but it is also a recurring reason that participants believe explains a perceived lack of success so far.

The response of Participant 28, whilst agreeing that inter-religious peace organizations have been hindered by a lack of influence, additionally contributes the belief that it is also a matter of fiscal insufficiency. According to the 2002 research of Bilodeau, a key point of limitation for the IRPF was scarcity of funding for its activities (Bilodeau 2000: 26). Participant 28 claims to have been involved in working with the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation's efforts during the Civil War period, although this participant appeared to suggest that sparse funding is not just a specific problem for the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation. Participant 28 stated that 'these organizations..... are not very powerful and so their influence and funds are not massive at all' (P28/2013/WP), and by 'these organizations', this participant is here referring to the two inter-religious peace organizations they are reportedly aware of according to their earlier response to Interview Question Two. In Participant 28's case, they claimed to be aware of both the Sarvodaya Movement and obviously the IRPF. Accordingly Participant 28 must therefore be suggesting that both the IRPF and the Sarvodaya Movement have to an extent been obstructed by financial

limitations. Whilst Bilodeau's research can at least confirm the accuracy of this estimation as it pertains to the IRPF, expectantly it does not concern itself at all with the financial situation of the Sarvodaya Movement. Yet featured on the 'About' section of the Sarvodaya Movement's website is a disclosure of the organization's current budget, which it states to be in the excesses of five-million US dollars (Sarvodaya 2013c).

Initially then there appears a temptation to dismiss Participant 28's generalization of this issue outside of the IRPF, yet it also later states in the same section of Sarvodaya's website that during the 1990s 85% of the organization's external donations 'dried-up'(Sarvodaya 2013c). Such a deleterious effect on the resources of the Sarvodaya Movement entailed that it had to scale down its operations and presumably this would have impacted upon its potential for success. Ultimately then it would seem that Participant 28's perspective that meagre funding has to some extent generally limited the success of some inter-religious peace organizations is justified, although at least in the case of Sarvodaya this does not seem to be today a lingering contention. Uniting the majority of the nine participants affirming the apparent success of inter-religious peace organizations in Sri Lanka, is the assertion that such have made progress in terms of strengthening bonds between otherwise conflicting communities. Participant 22 is clear in their response that 'There are a lot less Tamils wanting to separate from Sri Lanka, and a lot more Sinhala welcoming other peoples as a result of this dialogue' (P22/2013/WP). Likewise, Participant 16 was equally as direct in their praise of inter-religious peace organizations, accrediting them as having been 'very successful with helping Tamils want unity because it showed that not all Buddhists are enemies of the Tamils' (P16/2013/NWP). Other

participants however did despite proclaiming the relative success of inter-religious peace efforts also acknowledge that such success has not been without impediment or limitation. Participant 9 for example states their belief that 'it has been quite successful by strengthening the relationships between communities, but this kind of activity also has many enemies. Even the Government has objected to these organizations because they protest against them' (P9/2013/NCP).

Participant 3 evidently shares similar concerns to Participant 9, commenting that 'I think it has been successful because different communities are starting to come together, but a lack of funding and Sinhala extremist propaganda have affected its success' (P3/2013/CP). Over the course of analyzing the first theme of this data collection, it has become clear that many Sri Lankan Hindus perceive State opposition as having posed a detrimental effect upon the accomplishments of inter-religious peacebuilding. The statements of Participants 3 and 9 seem to reaffirm this, yet they also argue that inter-religious peace efforts have nonetheless provided a beneficial social service in spite of this. Participant 3 additionally seems to agree with Participant 28 in that financial resources have to a certain extent diminished potential success of inter-religious peace organizations (P3/2013/CP). And so whilst the majority of participants perceive inter-religious peacebuilding as having been so far of little benefit, there are notwithstanding a comparatively smaller yet nonetheless still substantial pool of participants whose perceptions defend the legacy of inter-religious peace efforts as having been relatively successful. Common though to both the former as well as the latter, is the view that to some extent the political forces at play in Sri Lanka have proved problematic for inter-religious peace efforts, as has the availability of financial resources. However in addition to simply asking participants to

directly evaluate the success and/or failure of inter-religious peace organizations, one also must take into consideration how participants would gauge the possibility of further widespread violence or war reoccurring in Sri Lanka.

Such is necessitated by the notion that it would be all too easy for participants to simply disregard the effectiveness of inter-religious peace efforts because they appeared to have little impact upon the proceedings of the actual Civil War. For example, at the beginning of the Civil War, Sarvodaya Movement adopted the 'crisis mobilization' model by publically voicing a critique of the violence, which was only to be met with scorn and defamation of the organization. Note here also how frequently participants had commented on how inter-religious peace organizations were snubbed by those in authoritative positions. And yet as Chapter 5 had uncovered, inter-religious peace efforts did not solely concentrate upon 'crisis mobilization' or 'interventionist' models of conflict resolving strategies which apply during times of manifest violence, for they also emphatically employed the 'saturation' model which seeks to unite conflict parties through education and encounter. The saturation model is in a sense a subtler approach than crisis mobilization with regards to it not requiring actual violent outbursts to be practised, nor does it demand the striking impact essential for short-term transformation as do these other models. Saturation is instead staged for long-term gradual evolution, and so can be typically less publically visible than instances of crisis mobilization or the interventionist model. Accordingly a means of measuring with greater accuracy whether or not inter-religious peace organizations have been effective according to Sri Lankan Hindus is to examine if participants perceive any improvement in inter-communal relationships, for such would be the crux of saturation practice.

Interview Question Eleven attempted to obtain this information by inquiring of participants to what extent they would assess the likelihood of further widespread violence occurring between the various religious and ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Theoretically, should participants regard there being a small possibility of this, they are in effect providing scope to suggest that inter-religious peace organizations may indeed have been so far relatively effective – or at least more so than they had initially visualized. This would be due to enhanced inter-communal relations being such a key agenda of inter-religious peace organizations via the application of the saturation model, and that these organizations were the principal bodies promulgating this ideal in Sri Lanka. Accordingly if participants could identify an improvement in inter-communal relationships, it may be that they have been witness to the relative success of inter-religious peace efforts, without being conscious of it. After completing all interviews, it became clear that participant perspectives on whether or not widespread violence would return to Sri Lanka predominantly admitted that such seems a realistic possibility; albeit though, one that is perceived to be lacking in imminence. A small number of participants – specifically 29% – argued that foreseeable future violence between ethnic groups is an unlikely prospect in Sri Lanka. However their common rationale for such a perspective is due not to improved relationships between ethnic communities in Sri Lanka, but rather a fatigue or fear of violence. Participant 25 remarked that 'The war was an extreme time and I doubt we would return to this because it reminded us what we have to lose' (P25/2013/NWP), and Participant 18 pronounced 'Very few would like war again. Muslims, Tamils and Sinhala all lost friends and family in the war, and they

would not want to repeat this so there would be little support for more violence on all sides' (P18/2013/CP).

The responses of Participants 25 and 18 typify what was said by those who believed that further warfare was not upon the horizon for Sri Lanka. Participants 4, 11, 12, 20 and 22 also all responded with some variant of the above justification that Sri Lankans have simply 'had enough' of violence, for as Participant 20 so eloquently phrased it 'Nobody wants to fight here anymore now. The war was a very expensive time, it cost the people of Sri Lanka thousands of lives, and the government millions of rupees' (P20/2013/CP). Interestingly though Participant 12 also alludes to the notion that there are those that would wish for further violence; however, they are so minute that their capabilities of creating such is effectively rendered impotent. Participant 12's exact response was 'After the defeat of the LTTE, many Tamils wanted to continue their fight, but there was no organization and spirits were low. So many left Sri Lanka to go to the UK, Canada or Norway so they could escape. Those that have stayed are too tired to fight, but they will not forget' (P12/2013/CP). Whilst Participant 12's response was forthright in depicting a Sri Lanka that is far from internally at peace, the other participants who also doubt the near prospect of violence do not do so on grounds which suggest anything different from Participant 12. These other participants only suggest that an avoidance of violence is a consequence of Sri Lankans of differing ethnicities and religions experiencing a mutual exhaustion of destruction and loss, without claiming at all that inter-community reconciliation has had any effect upon this. In other terms, ethnic groups are still conflicting in Sri Lanka but they are not currently at war for they do not for the foreseeable future possess the strength to be.

With 29% of participants accounted for as sharing this opinion, 64% of participants do conversely seem to appreciate that Sri Lanka is currently in a position where it may return to widespread violence in the future. The remaining 7%, comprising Participants 1, 13 and 14, only provided noncommittal answers that argued it was too difficult to predict such things. Among those 64% of participants specified above, there appears a distinction between those who agree that violent outbreaks are likely to reappear in Sri Lanka but not in any immediate capacity, and those who seem convinced that a lengthy period of time is not a requirement before it may reoccur. The former greatly outnumber the latter, with twelve participants subscribing to this first opinion and only six to the second. Included amongst the former is Participant 17 who stated their view that 'I don't think war will come again soon because all peoples are still recovering from the last one. But people will not forget this war, and this anger will be carried into the future with our children' (P17/2013/WP), and Participant 7 who said 'I do not think anyone is ready for war now, but unless something is done to unite the people, we can only expect a repeat' (P7/2013/WP). Participants of this opinion are contending that future violence is entirely a future possibility, though not without conflicting parties first undergoing a recuperation period of sorts, seemingly to come to terms with the devastation of the Civil War. But beyond this, these participants are claiming that further war is an authentic possibility if certain adjustments are not made. On the other hand, participants of the latter grouping do not appear to agree that any particular period of time is in need of elapsing before violence may return.

Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 19 and 23 all seem to defend the notion that the resumption of widespread violence is a very real concern for the near future, essentially on the grounds that belligerent inter-communal dynamics remain. Participant 23 supports their conclusion by stating that 'Nothing really changed since the war; lots of Tamils and Sinhala do not like to mix and would prefer to be separate' (P23/2013/NWP). Participant 5 similarly commented that 'The anger that led to war has not gone away, even though the war itself has for the moment' (P5/2013/CP). Participant 2 affirms that inflammatory sectarian ideologies are still at play in Sri Lanka when stating that 'Tamils here are still very angry about the Sinhala government and the crimes it has committed. The LTTE has been beaten yes, but there is still much support for the cause to create a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka' (P2/2013/WP). Yet any distinction then between those who believe in the viable possibility of future violence in Sri Lanka is ultimately only slight with regards to this current point of analysis, because both allotted groups equally suggest that there has been little which has relieved any of the contention between religious and ethnic communities in Sri Lanka. Accordingly there is little scope to suggest from participant estimations that inter-religious peace organizations have impacted massively upon the resolution of conflict, for not a single participant here appeared to regard any widespread improvement in inter-communal relations in Sri Lanka, primarily because the majority confess that further violence is a tactile possibility. In addition however, even those who doubt the likelihood of foreseeable violence regard its proposed continued absence to be a result of mutual weariness of death and destruction, rather than a shift towards amiable inter-communal relationships. Perhaps then the majority of participants who had initially answered that they were cynical of inter-religious peace organizations as

having attained much success are justified to an even greater extent in providing such a response.

6.2. Sri Lankan Hindu Experiences of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations

Regarding participants' actual engagement with inter-religious peace organizations, ten of the total twenty-eight (36%) disclosed within answers to Interview Questions Three[51] and Four[52] that they had at some point since the onset of the Civil War been involved in the activities of these organizations. Specifically, nine of those participants (90%) who had participated in the work of inter-religious peace organizations had done so with the Sarvodaya Movement. The remaining one participant here claims to have participated with the IRPF. No participant reported to have been involved with more than one inter-religious peace organizations. In terms of when participation with these organizations occurred, of the nine who had worked with the Sarvodaya Movement, a majority of 67% (six participants) professed involved in their activities during the Civil War period alone. Of the remaining three participants, two claimed to have worked with the Sarvodaya Movement during the post-war period, whilst the final participant here stated they had been involved with the Sarvodaya Movement during both the Civil War and post-war periods. With regards to Participant 28, the only participant to have worked with the IRPF, their involvement with this organization occurred during the Civil War period only. In

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[51] Which asked 'Have you ever participated in any of the following organizations' work during the Civil War period - the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation, the Congress of Religions, the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka?'.
[52] Which asked 'Have you ever participated in any of the following organizations' work since the end of the Civil War - the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation, the Congress of Religions, the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka?'.

summary then, seven of the ten total participants who had worked with inter-religious peace organizations had done so during the Civil War. Two of these ten had worked with inter-religious peace organizations only after the cessation of the Civil War, whilst only one had worked with them during both the time of Civil War as well as the current period following its termination. The pattern of this data collection seems to quite clearly suggest two primary considerations: firstly, it would appear that Hindu involvement was strongest in the Sarvodaya Movement's work, and secondly that this involvement within the work of inter-religious peace organizations occurred predominantly during the Civil War period.

It is possible to argue that the Sarvodaya Movement seems to have attracted the greatest concentration of involvement from participants due to reasons previously discussed concerning why so many Sri Lankan Hindus would have been aware of this particular organization in the first instance. It has already become evident during the course of this research that the Sarvodaya Movement had received a notable degree of publicity since the beginnings of the Civil War, owing to its vociferous criticism of the Sri Lankan Government's policy and procedure, which was returned in due course by the Government's own tirade of disparagement. Notoriety is nonetheless fame, and not only would the media exposure resulting from this polemic exchange have engendered attention from the Sri Lankan Hindu community as part of wider Sri Lankan society, so too would the manner in which the Sarvodaya Movement expressed solidarity with Sri Lankan Tamils through both word and deed via this public platform. Not only then did the Sarvodaya Movement enjoy general renown throughout Sri Lanka, but it also by the same means vividly depicted as having sympathies for Sri Lankan Tamils of which the majority have been Hindu.

Where this combination of general fame and specific sensibilities seems to explain why of all the inter-religious peace organizations the Sarvodaya Movement was the most recognized amongst participants, such would also explain the predominance of participants having been involved with this organization over that of the others. Though this data confirms that Sri Lankan Hindus have to an extent been involved in the work of the IRPF, it was only a single participant which amounted to 10% of those who had been involved with any of the inter-religious peace organizations.

This disparity between the number of participants that have worked with either Sarvodaya or the IRPF may be explained in similar terms relating to public image. This research has established that the IRPF did not experience a similar degree of publicity as the Sarvodaya Movement, nor did it publically express particular camaraderie with the Tamil community whilst reproaching Sinhala ethnonationalism as did Sarvodaya. Naturally then one would expect there to be less Hindu participation with the IRPF, and the majority to have occurred within the activities of the Sarvodaya Movement. The question now though relates to why most participant involvement with inter-religious peace organizations transpired during the Civil War period. When participants who had worked with inter-religious peace organizations were asked during the interviews whether or not they would once again work with these organizations[53], of those six who had worked with them only during the Civil War period, 50% seemed to suggest that they would be willing to participate once again if certain conditions of conflict were met. As examples, Participant 9 stated 'Yes I would be very happy to if I could find the time. But with the war over now, there is less urgency for me to get involved again' (P9/2013/NCP), and Participant

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[53] Constituting Interview Question Six (see Appendix B).

26 responded that 'I would if any fighting became really intense again, but at the minute I am very busy and there is not enough violence to worry me' (P26/2013/WP). Participant 22 also replied in a similar vein, expressing that they 'would probably join again if the rioting and terrorism began again' (P22/2013/WP). What is implied within the responses of these participants is that the current state of conflict in Sri Lanka is one which no longer demands immediate action, whereas previously, the hazards associated with open warfare necessitated immediate action for the sake of self or communal preservation.

Hence during the Civil War period, working with inter-religious peace organizations appeared a highly attractive prospect given the then palpable threat of violence. I would argue thus that the preponderance of participant involvement with inter-religious peace organizations during the Civil War period may be articulated as a reaction to the heightened proximity of danger during this time. At present where there is comparatively far less violence, there is consequentially far less impetus to inspire involvement in peace-making activities. However whilst such may apply to the cases of certain participants, such as Participants 9, 22 and 26, Participant 13 on the other hand provided an alternative rationale for them having worked with inter-religious peace organizations during the Civil War without resuming their involvement in the post-war environ. Participant 13's uncertainty of future involvement seems to stem from disillusionment regarding the efficacy of inter-religious peace organizations, for they said of their involvement that 'it felt a very promising experience, but I did not see it do much to bring peace' and so they are 'not sure any more if it is of much usefulness' (P13/2013/NWP). Yet Participant 13's opinion is of an absolute minority, with Participants 25 and 28 also responding with

answers similar to Participants 9, 22 and 26; albeit though, with a minor divergence. Participant 25 answered Interview Question 6 with 'I got involved to stop the war and without war I don't think as much people are needed, and especially me as I already have learned to accept all other people' (P25/2013/NWP), and Participant 28 claimed that he may become involved once again 'but there are others who would benefit from it more because I have learned to truly appreciate others. Only if war returns would I definitely become involved again quickly' (P/2013/WP).

The responses of Participants 25 and 28 also seem to confirm that it was the presence of open warfare which encourages involvement with inter-religious peace organizations. However both of these participants appear to recognize that Sri Lankan inter-religious peace organizations have performed roles other than intervening within actual combat situations. Chapter 5 highlighted how Sri Lankan inter-religious peace organizations have conformed not only to the 'crisis mobilization' model of inter-religious conflict resolution, but have also utilized the 'saturation' model whereby education initiatives and dialogue encounters are facilitated to begin eroding contentious relationships. With the absence of open warfare now in Sri Lanka, there is little need for crisis mobilization because such occurs at the onset of violent outbreaks. Yet there does remain a need for saturation, because this thesis has articulated the continuity of discordant ethnic relationships which previously led to open warfare. However Participants 25 and 28 are arguing that as they personally no longer harbour hostility towards any of their neighbours, there is little need for them to continue participating with inter-religious peace organizations because at present these are limited to the saturation model. Only if open warfare remerges then they would be eager to participate once again with

these organizations because there would be a resurgence of crisis mobilization, of which the goal is to attempt to confront others, whereas saturation entails making internal personal changes which only require to be made once like they claim to have done. Unlike Participant 13 then, Participants 25 and 28 have not so far continued their involvement with inter-religious peace organizations beyond the Civil War period because of disillusionment regarding the potential effectiveness of their efforts. Rather like Participants 9, 22 and 26, Participants 25 and 28 have not so far felt compelled to resume involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, largely because of the absence of significant violence.

However to suggest that a current absence of open warfare has entailed that Sri Lankan Hindus have categorically avoided working with inter-religious peace organizations would be untrue. Participants 7 and 16 have both only become involved with inter-religious peace organizations during a post-war environment[54], whereas Participant 3 reports to have been involved with them during both mid-war and post-war contexts. Moreover, all of these three participants confirmed that they would desire to continue their involvement with inter-religious peace organizations without specifying any conditions that would first have to be met[55]. Participant 7 and 16 stated simply 'Yes I would definitely continue participating' (P7/2013/WP) and 'I would be excited to continue working with them' (P16/2013/NWP) respectively. Participant 3 similarly responded with 'I would very much like to continue working with Sarvodaya in the future, as it is very important that we do not repeat what has passed' (P3/2013/CP). Accordingly, the presence of open warfare does not seem to

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[54] Note that Chapter 7 will explain that these two particular individuals actually desired to participate during the Civil War, although the presence of LTTE reportedly deterred this.

[55] All three participants justified this in agreement with my own observation in Chapter 1 that conflict did not cease with the culmination of the Civil War, with each stressing the need to continue working at fostering sympathetic inter-ethnic relations in order to prevent further violence from arising.

be a mandatory decisive factor in determining the continuing involvement of Participants 7, 16 and 3. The implications herein are that these particular participants believe that they still have something to contribute or gain from the activities related to the saturation model, whereas other participants argued that they no longer considered this variant of conflict resolution measure to be useful in terms of their own isolated cases. Yet with the exception of Participant 13, all other participants who claimed involvement with inter-religious peace organizations - whether with the Sarvodaya Movement or the IRPF, within the post-war or mid-war contexts or even both – commented on these experiences only in positive terms.

The focal trend that seems to run through most of these comments was praise for the way in which inter-religious peace organizations had begun to eradicate inter-communal barriers and consolidate relationships between these estranged communities. Participants 3, 4, 9, 16, 22, 25, 26 and 28 all included this acknowledgement as at least part of their answers to Interview Question Five, which requested that participants who reported to have been involved with inter-religious peace organizations essentially review their experience(s) of such. Regarding those who had worked with the Sarvodaya Movement, Participant 16 for example said that 'Sarvodaya was doing wonderful things for Sri Lanka by bringing Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim together to work for peace and move away from the past' (P16/2013/NWP) and Participant 25 'Sarvodaya is what Sri Lanka should look like, with all people coming together to stop the violence and learning to become friends' (P25/2013/NWP). The only participant to have worked with the IRPF, Participant 28, stated similarly to those who had worked with the Sarvodaya Movement that 'It was rewarding to befriend people from communities outside of my own and work together

to bring peace' (P28/2013/WP). Though an answer of this kind to Interview Question Five was common to 80% of all participants who answered it, it was not the only aspect of inter-religious peace organization that would receive praise from participants. Another trend which emerged, though not of the same breadth as was the above, was that which lauded inter-religious peace organizations as a mechanism which allowed for people to protest against social or political injustices related to conflict via non-violent means. Participants 3, 4, 22 and 26 all also commented on how working with the Sarvodaya Movement afforded them this opportunity, with Participant 22 stating that 'it allowed Tamils to protest against government policy without joining terrorist groups like the LTTE' (P22/2013/WP).

Participant 3's response also contributed two other considerations as to why Sri Lankan Hindus have positively rated their experiences working with inter-religious peace organizations. Firstly, Participant 3 claims that they were effective in deconstructing stereotypes, for 'Sarvodaya is also proof that not all Buddhists in Sri Lanka are racist' (P3/2013/CP). Of course this is a point related to the earlier one which praised inter-religious peace organizations for contributing towards the disintegration of inter-communal barriers, yet it also goes beyond simply reiterating this by instead identifying a key way in which it has achieved this for Sri Lankan Hindus. Previously in this analysis it was discussed how then Buddhism practised by the Sarvodaya Movement can undoubtedly be delineated as a liberal and progressive form, and that this was contextually contrasted with another popular Buddhism that possessed conservative ethnonationalistic undertones coupled with an inclination towards absolutist truth claims. It was also debated here how the former has been largely overshadowed by the latter, particularly in political circles,

and so the characterization of Buddhism in Sri Lanka hinges predominantly upon this variant. Participant 3 seems to acknowledge this by suggesting that a default 'outsider' perspective of Buddhists in Sri Lanka are that they are racially prejudiced, clearly owing to the ethnonationalist underpinning of the prevailing Buddhist model in Sri Lanka. Yet in encountering the Sarvodaya Movement, Participant 3 claims that any outsider prejudices against Buddhists resulting from the exposure to this politically formidable 'ethnicized' Buddhism will consequently become offset due to there being quite a patent polarity between this Buddhism and Buddhism of the Sarvodaya Movement.

Additionally, Participant 3 alone also highlights and congratulates the relief effort undertaken by the Sarvodaya Movement in response to the needs of the wounded and displaced. It is understandable that only one participant identified this in response to this question, for though they may be deemed as commendable works, they may nonetheless be regarded more as humanitarian operations than as part of the process of actual conflict resolution. Participants have demonstrated then that there are several aspects of the work carried out by inter-religious peace organizations which are to them considered laudable, although preponderantly such revolves around the recognition of their role in improving inter-communal relations. The only participant to have been involved in the work of inter-religious peace organizations and has not reviewed their experience as entirely positive was Participant 13. As was mentioned previously, Participant 13 claimed their involvement initially 'felt a very promising experience' whilst arguing that ultimately they 'did not see it do much to bring peace' (P13/2013/NWP). As such Participant 13 is not stating that their actual experience of working with inter-religious peace

organizations was a wholly negative one, but they are in a sense lamenting that such activities did not appear to make the desired impact. Participant 13 is thus critical of consequences of his experiences, and not of the experiences themselves. Finally Participant 7, who had worked with Sarvodaya during the post-war context, praised Sarvodaya in only very vague and general terms by stating that its activities are 'exactly what we need after the war so Sri Lanka can begin to heal its wounds' (P7/2013/WP). Though with only 36% of total participants having worked with inter-religious peace organizations, there remain eighteen participants composing a 64% majority who had contrastingly not at all become involved with these organizations.

6.2.1. Reflecting on Future Involvement

The 64% of participants who have not so far worked with inter-religious peace organizations were instead asked Interview Question Seven[56] to determine whether or not they would consider doing so in the future should the opportunity arise. The responses provided by participants here identified that those who had not yet worked with inter-religious peace organizations were either generally welcoming to the prospect of doing so in the future, currently undecided about this, or indeed confidently opposed to becoming involved. Of these 64% of total participants who were questioned in this regard, 44% reported to be currently unsure about whether they would become involved with inter-religious peace organizations, whilst 33% stated that they would absolutely decline any opportunity to work with them. Finally then, it was only 22% of these participants who claimed that they would definitely

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[56] Which asked 'If you have not previously been involved in the work of inter-religious peace organizations, how would you feel about doing so if the opportunity arises in the future?'.

embrace the opportunity of working with inter-religious peace organizations. Clearly these numbers are not vastly disparate, and so whilst the majority response was that of current uncertainty, there are nevertheless relatively strong trends of opposition and affirmation. There is a direct and expected correlation between those who would oppose involvement with inter-religious peace organizations and the 'sceptical' response to Interview Question Nine, which invited participants to assess the utility of inter-religious peacebuilding in context. A likewise correlation may be observed between participants that answered Interview Question Nine in a way that qualified as 'optimistic', and an apparent willingness to cooperate with inter-religious peace organizations. Unsurprisingly then, those who remain uncertain about whether they would become involved with inter-religious peace organizations made a response to Interview Question Nine that became aligned to the 'ambivalent' category.

In terms of providing reasoning for reaching their decision of whether or not they would accept future involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, participants did not seem to particularly elaborate on their chosen position. Instead responses were somewhat terse, though in fact the participant's later responses to Interview Question Nine would appear to function as explication for these answers to Interview Question Seven. For example Participant 8 responded to Interview Question 7 briefly with 'I would likely participate', though in reply to Interview Question Nine they stated that 'Without this I do not think Sri Lankans would learn to get along so easily' (P8/2013/NCP). Participant 8's position of remaining open to involvement with inter-religious peace organization is underlined by their belief in its necessity for binding Sri Lankan society. Note also how Participant 12 responded with utmost brevity to Interview Question Seven by stating that 'I would decline any involvement', yet in

answering Interview Question 9 this participant divulged 'It would not work because lots of Sinhala do not want to live with us. They say we are foreigners in this land and have no right to be here' (P12/2013/CP). Participant 12's scepticism of the success available to inter-religious peace efforts, in this case because of a perceived Sinhala belligerence, informs their opposing position to become involved in them. After all, if one were to assume Participant 12's perspective, what use would there be in partaking in seemingly a futile endeavour? The simple essence then of whether or not participants who have not previously been involved with inter-religious peace organizations would do so in the future, is a consideration determined entirely upon from what perspective they regard its efficacy as a peace medium.

It is important to note those 22% of participants who claim to be keen to work with inter-religious peace organizations, but who have so far yet to actually become involved with them. This raises the question of why it is they have not yet become involved, if indeed they are genuinely supportive of these organizations and willing to engage with them. Uniformly cited by these individuals were a plethora of prosaic lifestyle commitments, such as familial and professional responsibilities, which they claim have so far inhibited the possibilities available to them for involvement. Yet perhaps this could to an extent seem somewhat of an unconvincing justification, given that it is highly unlikely that others who have and are currently working with these organizations do not have similar duties to maintain. During the analysis of the first and previous theme (i.e. Section 6.1 of this chapter), the presence of war appeared to have been such a critical factor in the decision making process for many participants who had actually worked with these organizations. Could such suggest then that a resurgence of open warfare in Sri Lanka would be needed in order for

these participants to commit to working with inter-religious peace organizations? Possibly so, as the overwhelming bulk of participant involvement with inter-religious peace organizations having occurred during the Civil War with many of these participants claiming that they would not resume this unless Sri Lanka would return to a state of war. One could suggest there is a certain sense in this, as an escalation of hostilities such as open warfare would surely necessitate a counterpoise of the appropriate scale, and hence motivate so far non-involved individuals into action.

6.3. Conclusion

This initial phase of field data analysis drew solely upon the information provided by primary interviewees in response to semi-structured questions that were generated to address the following two queries. Firstly, it attempted to establish how aware Sri Lankan Hindus seemed to be of inter-religious peace-building, as well as articulating their perspectives concerning the effectiveness of this approach to conflict resolution and the four select organizations which have been facilitating it. Furthermore, it sought to identify to what extent the Sri Lanka Hindu community appeared to have been involved in the work of these organizations, and to what degree they considered such experiences as having been positive and valuable. In terms of the former, the crux of the inquiry was to evaluate if the religious or political associations of inter-religious peace organizations impacted upon the prospects of Sri Lankan Hindus engaging with them. Regarding specifically religious connotations, it would appear that according to participant responses, neither the Buddhist affiliation of the Sarvodaya Movement, nor the Christian background of the IRPF, were interpreted as

problematic. Of course evaluations of this kind were intrinsically linked to the question of awareness, and it transpired that levels of awareness concerning each individual inter-religious organization were greatly disparate. The Sarvodaya Movement benefitted from universal recognition among participants, whilst not a single one claimed to be familiar with the IRC-SL, which cast certain doubts upon its largely self-proclaimed successes. Of the remaining organizations, the IRPF was recognized by just over a third of participants (38%), whereas the COR experienced only a modest (2%) degree of acknowledge amongst participants. Though the hypothetical concerns regarding the religious undertones of inter-religious peace organizations appear to have been inconsequential, where political associations were concerned, it seems conversely that the COR's link to the Sri Lankan State for some was troubling, although this was not the case for all.

Although it would have been useful to observe how the political allegiance of the IRC-SL affected potential Hindu engagement, this was not possible due to the total absence of awareness identified above. In the process of acquiring this information, insight was also gained into participant perceptions of inter-religious engagement as a method of conflict resolution conceptually speaking, as well as how effective it appears to have been in practice. In terms of the latter, participant responses differed widely, forming distinct polarities with a pronounced negative skew, meaning that more participants (64%) agreed that inter-religious peace organizations have been largely ineffective in contributing to conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka, than those who would dispute this (32%). Regarding though the theoretical utility of inter-religious engagement as a medium of contextual conflict resolution, participant responses were much more balanced, reflecting trends which might be

labelled optimistic (43%), ambivalent (32%), or sceptical (25%) about its potential for allaying belligerences. In light of the previous statistics, this may suggest that in spite of any perceived failings of inter-religious peace organizations up to this point, such may not have entirely dissuaded Sri Lankan Hindus of its potential efficacy. The second theme of analysis considered in this chapter discerned that it was only a minority of participants (36%) who had actual experience of involvement with an inter-religious peace organization. No participant reported being involved with more than one organization, and the overwhelming majority of involvement was with the Sarvodaya Movement (90%), whilst only a single participant claimed involvement with the work of the IRPF. None suggested any involvement with either the COR or the IRC-SL. A greater number of participants had become involved during the Civil War (67%) than those who had only become involved since its cessation (22%), whilst only one claimed involvement during both mid-war and post-war contexts.

It was reasoned that the urgency of open warfare could have contributed to this pattern, as many participants who were involved previously during the Civil War cited that they would not consider any further involvement unless tension escalated to this level once again. All participants who had at any point become involved within the work of inter-religious peace organizations rated their experience as positive and as having been beneficial in terms of to an extent combating social discord, aside from a single interviewee who became discouraged by a perceived ineffectiveness of this approach to conflict resolution, stating that they would avoid further involvement. In spite of this credit however, the general response from participants claimed to detect an ongoing instability within Sri Lankan society which to some portends future violence, and so the essential inference of this is that any achievements of inter-

religious peace organizations towards conflict resolution have not been particularly wide-ranging. In order to account for this, factors such as funding limitations and scepticism or uncertainty towards the utility of inter-religious peace initiatives identified within participant responses would undoubtedly be relevant here, as would others such as the presence of the LTTE which will be explored from the onset of the following chapter. There were then 64% of participants who had not yet opted for involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, and a slight majority of these (44%) were still unsure about doing so. 33% of these were however outright dismissive of the prospect of becoming involved, as they were sceptical of its potential to achieve genuine resolution. The remaining 22% however claimed to be interested in prospective involvement, although they – perhaps somewhat dubiously – attributed their inaction so far to unaccommodating schedules. However as was aforementioned, perhaps a resurgence of widespread violence could enhance it as a priority to such individuals.

Chapter 7 – Tamil Separatism and its Influence upon the Prospects of Sri Lankan Hindu Engagement with Inter-Religious Peace Initiatives

7.1. Introduction

Within this chapter, primary interview participant responses will be examined where they responded to questions about how Tamil separatist ideology and its proponents have affected the opportunities for Sri Lankan Hindus to have become involved in the work of inter-religious peace initiatives. Both mid-war and post-war environments were considered in this regards, and so with respect to the former, it was specifically the LTTE that were the focus within this time period due to them having monopolized the Tamil separatist movement with far-reaching influence (O'Ballance 1989: 62). With the LTTE no longer active in any official capacity in post-war Sri Lanka, the inquiry into the post-war situation was much more general in that it does not consider the influence of Tamil separatist ideology in relation to any single organization. Instead, it first seeks to identify according to interviewee perspectives and experiences the post-war shape of Tamil separatism and its proponents, before thereafter considering its influence on the question of their participation within inter-religious peace initiatives. This will evaluate whether the ostensibly diminished stature of Tamil separatism following the LTTE's defeat equates to a possible lesser impact upon the prospects of Hindu involvement in inter-religious peace work. Furthermore, the relationship between Hindu ethics concerning violence and warfare will be explored in light of prospective support of militant Tamil separatism, using

LTTE recruitment as a frame of reference. The purpose of this is to assess whether or not the religious beliefs of Sri Lankan Hindus have been conducive to lending support to militant Tamil separatism, and therefore also their capability of doing so if this course of action continues to be pursued within the post-war environ.

7.1.1. The Impact of the LTTE Presence

Previously in Chapter 4, I had hypothesized as to whether or not the presence of the LTTE could have influenced the Sri Lankan Hindu reception of inter-religious peace organizations. Considering that in the case of Selliah Parameswaran Kurukkal, the LTTE had clearly demonstrated the brutal lengths they were prepared to venture to if one was to be perceived as working against their interests[57], could not a similar fate be an outcome for those engaging with inter-religious peace organizations? Having argued in Chapter 4 that if such had been the case, the theoretical inferences of this were that Sri Lankan Hindus may have been dissuaded from working with inter-religious peace organizations due to fear of a vindictive response from the LTTE. As may be observed from Appendix B, Interview Question Sixteen asked participants whether or not the presence of the LTTE had affected their decision to work with inter-religious peace organizations. The interview data would seem to show that this hypothesizing was to at least an extent true with a significant portion of participants declaring that fear of LTTE reprisal inhibited them against working with inter-religious peace organizations. 32% or a total of nine participants[58] shared in this opinion, providing comments such as 'To be loyal to the LTTE's cause, you could not join

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[57] See Chapter 4 for details.

[58] That is, Participants 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, 18, 21, 24 and 27.

organizations like this. They would kill you. Even if you didn't like the LTTE, you still could not join because they would also kill you for being a traitor to your people' (P21/2013/WP) and 'Yes, the Tigers would kill you for being in an organization like this because they did not support their goals' (P11/2013/WP). Both Participants 16 and 7 claimed to have become involved in the work of inter-religious peace organizations in a post-war context, though they admitted that during the Civil War they did not dare to chance involvement due to the presence of the LTTE.

Participant 16 for example stated that 'Most Tamils did not support the LTTE, but they were afraid of them. Now that they are gone I do like many others feel more comfortable to participate in this' (P16/2013/NWP), whilst Participant 7 answered 'I was afraid during the war to become too active for peace because the LTTE were not usually tolerant of this' (P7/2013/WP). Participant 16's assertion that many other Sri Lankan Hindus feel at greater ease to work with inter-religious peace organizations with the dissipation of the LTTE is supported by the responses of Participants 24, 27 and 8. These participants respectively replied 'With the LTTE gone it is much easier for me to think about participating, because I can longer anger them by doing so' (P24/2013/NWP), 'I would rather participate now than during the war, because the LTTE would have killed those making friends with the Sinhala' (P27/2013/WP) and 'The LTTE have never been a problem for me, but it feels safer without them to do these things' (P8/2013/NCP). Of these nine participants who confessed that the presence of the LTTE had discouraged involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, Participant 18 uniquely posited that alongside this there was the additional greater pressure from certain Sinhala Buddhists who would react violently towards those working with these organizations (P18/2013/CP).

Participant 28, by working with the IRPF during the Civil War period clearly did not fear the LTTE to the extent so as to avoid involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, nevertheless acknowledged that the LTTE had exerted considerable leverage upon the Sri Lankan Hindus by way of fear (P28/2013/WP). Yet like Participant 18, Participant 28 also claims that 'Sinhala extremists' were by far a more substantial menace to those considering working with inter-religious peace organizations than were the LTTE.

Evidently then for some Sri Lankan Hindus, the presence of the LTTE proved to pose a disconcerting one when considering working with inter-religious peace organizations due to an implicit possibility of hostile retaliation. The likely consequence of this with regards to their decision of whether or not to confirm involvement in the activities of these organizations would be one of rejection. Yet with the defeat of the LTTE and the concomitant transition from a mid-war to post-war environ, it would seem that some Sri Lankan Hindus perceive the situation to be one more conductive to their own involvement given that a previous source of intimidation has since been alleviated. However with a small number of participants also identifying another source which has functioned similar to the LTTE by way of similarly threatening violence to those working with inter-religious peace organizations, could there remain a justification to continue avoiding involvement with these organizations? This Sinhala 'extremism' as alluded to in the responses of Participants 24 and 18, is also gauged by these participants to have been a more pronounced threatening presence to those considering working with inter-religious peace organizations than the LTTE, as unlike the LTTE, its proponents have actually been observed violently disrupting inter-religious peace work (Juergensmeyer 2008:

125). Yet it may nonetheless appear that these participants have exaggerated the scale of the threat posed by Sinhala ethnonationalists, given that it was only these two of the total twenty-eight who had identified the perceived threat of LTTE reprisal whilst acknowledging a similar danger of fanatical Sinhala ethnonationalists, suggesting that it was not a general concern for participants and therefore perhaps not as exceptionally ominous as Participants 24 and 18 would make out.

Furthermore, in the current post-war context, hard-line Sinhala ethnonationalism remains intact whilst the LTTE does not, and so the only variable here which has altered between mid-war and post-war contexts is the presence of the LTTE. With many participants then feeling more comfortable about engaging with inter-religious peace organizations in a post-war context without the LTTE, the implication therefore is that aggressive Sinhala ethnonationalism was not considered by most participants as a threat greater than the LTTE, if even a threat at all. Thus whilst one may validly conclude here that Sinhala extremism may have been a threatening factor alongside the LTTE for some Sri Lankan Hindus when considering involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, it would appear a tenuous claim to insinuate that it should be considered to have provoked greater fear amongst Sri Lankan Hindus than the LTTE as Participants 28 and 18 would believe. Participant 28's response to Interview Question Sixteen is interesting insomuch as they clearly identify their own experience of the fear engendered by the presence of the LTTE and Sinhala ethnonationalist hardliners, yet they nevertheless opted to work with inter-religious peace organizations during the mid-war period where both of these threats were present. Although Participant 28 claims not to be able provide an explanation for why they did this, one could perhaps interpret their account as remarkable bravery, or

indeed as an indicator that the retaliative violence threatened by either of these sources was perceived as somewhat lacking in its potential to become reified[59]. With only nine participants of the total twenty-eight having admitted to the presence of LTTE as having discouraged them from becoming involved with inter-religious peace organizations, the illation here is that a greater proportion of others did not acknowledge the presence of the LTTE as one which had cast a baleful shadow over Sri Lankan Hindus when considering working with these organizations.

Of the twenty-eight total participants, a further 32%[60] did not express in any way that they had considered the presence of the LTTE as effective upon their decision of whether or not to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations. Moreover, these participants did thus not appear to have regarded the LTTE, or Sinhala extremism for that matter, a factor that would influence such a decision due to fear of violent repercussions. Perhaps this specific list of participants could be extended to include Participant 20, who responded to Interview Question Sixteen by stating that 'No it was not something I would be afraid of. The only danger was if you worked for the government, but these organizations were not a part of it' (P20/2013/CP). Though Participant 20 seems to agree with these previous nine in that they profess to have not regarded the LTTE's presence as a prospective hindrance pertaining to Sri Lankan Hindu involvement with inter-religious peace efforts, they do nonetheless imply that it could in fact be considered as such. Participant 2 possess only limited knowledge of Sri Lankan inter-religious peace organizations, having only claimed to be aware of the Sarvodaya Movement and the

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[59] Which, in terms of the LTTE at least, could be validated by the fact that there has been no documented attack upon those involved in inter-religious peace initiatives by its supporters.
[60] Specifically Participants 1, 4, 9, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 26

IRPF – both of whom are organizations distinct, or even outright polarized, from the Sri Lankan Government. However had they been aware of the COR too, their answer may have differed somewhat to have accommodated this inter-religious peace organization that does have government affiliation; for if the LTTE had in Participant 20's opinion posed a threat to those working alongside the Sri Lankan Government, then surely to work with the COR was to risk retribution from the LTTE.

Similar to Participant 28 though, three other participants[61] also identified that the LTTE did inflict an influence against working with inter-religious peace organizations amongst Sri Lankan Hindus, whilst they still opted to become involved in spite of this. Participant 22 commented that 'I did worry that the LTTE would attack these organizations, but it did not stop me from joining because I really wanted for peace to win' (P22/2013/WP), and Participant 25 stated that 'the LTTE had never appealed to me or frightened me so much that I would not strive for peace' (P25/2013/NWP). In the case of these two participants alongside Participant 28, it would seem that they too either possessed extraordinary courage or that they did not expect any threats of violence to be likely carried out. Participant 3 distinctively claims that though they recognized a theoretical threat from the LTTE if one were inclined to work with inter-religious peace organizations, specifically in the case of the Sarvodaya Movement the threat was minimal at worst given that 'the government hated Sarvodaya more than the LTTE did so they would not hurt them much' (P3/2013/CP). Participant 3 was articulating that because the Sarvodaya Movement received such disparaging affections from the Sri Lankan Government – the LTTE's principal enemy - the LTTE did not regard the organization as much of an adversary. The primary point here

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[61] Specifically Participants 3, 22 and 25.

then is that the relationship between the Sarvodaya Movement and the LTTE is reminiscent of the Arabian proverb 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. In other terms, the contentious relationship between the Sarvodaya Movement and the Sri Lankan Government entailed that a level of identification was possible between the Sarvodaya Movement and the LTTE, resulting in the Sarvodaya Movement being in effect protected from LTTE hostility.

A secondary point of concern in the response of Participant 3 is that whilst working with the Sarvodaya Movement may have benefitted from a sanctuary of sorts as far as the threat of LTTE retaliation was concerned, those working with other inter-religious peace organizations would remain open to this threat. During the analysis of the first theme I had recalled how for instance the IRPF's relative neutrality towards the Sri Lankan State had ensured their relationship dynamic was comparatively more amenable. Additionally with the IRC-SL and the COR enjoying similarly conformable relationships to the State, there is no means by which the LTTE could concede to them the same degree of identification as it could with the Sarvodaya Movement. And so where Sarvodaya could benefit from a relative sense of safety from LTTE attack, all other inter-religious peace organizations in Sri Lanka did not possess this same capacity for refuge. By reviewing all participant responses so far then it is evident that the presence of the LTTE did project an unnerving possibility of violence for a significant number of participants when considering working with inter-religious peace organizations. In summary then total of fourteen participants seemed to identify the LTTE's presence as one which could be a potential threat to those working with inter-religious peace organizations, with nine of which having been completely dissuaded from involvement during the time the LTTE

were fully operational. A further four of these fourteen participants, though acknowledging an LTTE threat, did not however allow this to prevent them from becoming involved; thereby suggesting that they were either remarkably brave individuals, or simply that they did not consider the threat to be poignantly real enough to provoke mortal concern.

The remaining one participant here, Participant 20, did not actually specify they were aware of such a threat, although their answer implied that had they a wider knowledge of inter-religious peace organizations they would acknowledge a threat posed by the LTTE to those who would work with them, or at least the COR (P20/2013/CP). In absolute contradistinction to the above fourteen participants, a slightly smaller number of nine participants did not however allude to any threat posed by the LTTE towards those becoming involved with inter-religious peace organizations. As such, it is possible to conclude that for some Sri Lankan Hindus, the presence of the LTTE did prove an important factor regarding their decision to work with inter-religious peace organizations because of a perceived threat of violence predicated on the assumption that the LTTE would consider such activities as working against their own agenda. For others however, the presence of the LTTE had ostensibly little bearing upon their decision to become involved. Yet with only twenty-three of the twenty-eight total participants already accounted for, there remain five participant responses yet to be considered. Participants 2, 5, 10 and 12 all confirmed that the presence of the LTTE had indeed affected their decision to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations. However unlike the other participants who had become hesitant due to fear of the LTTE, these five had instead reasoned that it was because of their support of the LTTE that they had

chosen against involvement (P2/2013/WP; P5/2013/CP; P10/2013/WP; P12/2013/CP).

What is apparent in such responses is that these participants are under the impression that inter-religious peace organizations and the LTTE were in the pursuit of divergent goals, and that they had determined the outcome sought by the LTTE as the one more to their benefit. Participant 2 for example stated 'I had supported the LTTE and not these organizations because the LTTE was the better hope for Tamil freedom. Without a homeland, there is always a danger that Tamils will suffer. These organizations did not want Tamils to fight for a homeland so I could not support them' (P2/2013/WP). It is then the political desires of Participant 2 which would entail their rejection of inter-religious peace organizations, for where they would see secession these organizations would strive to build unity. Participant 2 also provides a brief justification here for their support of the LTTE over that of inter-religious peace organizations, where they had stated that without a Tamil nation in Sri Lanka, the Tamils remain at risk of 'suffering' (P2/2013/WP). From Participant 2's answer to Interview Question Nine, they had proposed that the 'real issue' of conflict in Sri Lanka is 'political racism against Tamil people', and had in the following interview question suggested that there is still much unrest because of alleged 'war crimes' that the Government had supposedly committed (P2/2013/WP). Evidently the entire interview conducted with Participant 2 can verify what is meant by the 'suffering' they claim is endured by Sri Lankan Tamils in the country's current state paradigm; namely, that Tamils were being victimized by the existing power hegemony through ethnic prejudice and denial of justice. Participants 5 and 12 provided answers to Interview Question Sixteen that were similar in that they too favoured the LTTE aims

because they claim that such could have amounted to an end preferable to the current situation for Tamils.

Participant 5 responded laconically that they had instead supported the LTTE 'because I thought that Tamils would be better off with the LTTE than living beneath the Sinhala' (P5/2013/CP), whilst Participant 12 provided a more thorough answer that 'The LTTE was the strongest chance at getting independence, so I had to place my hopes with them instead of anything else. I do not like the violence, but my life would become far better in a Tamil homeland without Sinhala control' (P12/2013/CP). Both these participants are here using vocabulary which very much depicts an opinion that Tamils are regarded as subordinate to the Sinhala within the present Sri Lankan state construct. The LTTE are then considered liberators here, in that they are defended as being able to reverse the current Sinhala dominance over Tamils via the empowerment of independence. By contrast then, inter-religious peace organizations are seemingly assumed by these participants to be only capable of maintaining the inequitable status quo by virtue of them not advocating the pursuit of Tamil Eelam. From Participant 12's reply to Interview Question Nine, this 'Sinhala control' in Sri Lanka later alluded to is tantamount to a power structure influenced by discriminatory ideals, for they claim that 'lots of Sinhala do not want to live with us. They say we are foreigners in this land and have no right to be here' (P12/2013/CP). Like Participant 2 then, Participant 12 similarly supposes that with a current State design in Sri Lanka which is permeated with discriminative sensibilities towards Tamils, the most effective remedy to this situation was the LTTE and not inter-religious peace organizations. Therefore it behoved these participants to not

become involved with inter-religious peace organizations, because they could not in their opinion achieve a satisfactory end, whereas the LTTE apparently could.

Participant 10 argues in essence the very same point as Participants 2, 5 and 12, by have said 'I placed my faith in the Tigers because only they were doing what became necessary to protect Tamils' (P10/2013/WP). Additionally in an earlier response to Interview Question Eleven[62], Participant 10 agreed that Sinhala prejudice towards Tamils has been a lingering issue within Sri Lankan society (P10/2013/WP). Participant 5 then is the only one of these four participants to have not identified specifically Sinhala discrimination against Tamils as a major point of contention for Sri Lankan Tamils. Yet Participant 5 does nonetheless vaguely acknowledge a discordant relationship between Sinhala and Tamils, in their mind instigated by the Sinhala, as being an issue which has prevented peaceful cohabitation. This could be understood as an allusion to the alleged discrimination of Tamils by the Sinhala, although in any case it is notwithstanding as much an apparent justification for the LTTE and a fatal indictment against the utility of inter-religious peace organizations. In fact each of Participants 2, 5, 10 and 12 had earlier specified during their respective interviews that they each were doubtful that any effort on the part of inter-religious peace organizations to curtail conflict in Sri Lanka was ultimately futile. As such this would punctuate their common endorsement of the LTTE, because the LTTE were not attempting this task of brokering peace with the Sinhala, but were instead attempting to cordon Sri Lankan Tamil communities away from Sinhala people. And so it seems that as well as having deterred some Sri Lankan Hindus from engaging with inter-religious peace organizations with a threat of reprisal, the

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[62] Which asked 'Do you believe that there is currently peace in Sri Lanka, and how concerned are you that war or extensive violence between Sri Lanka's ethnic groups may reoccur in the near future?'.

LTTE also detracted support for these organizations from others because their method for procuring Tamil security was deemed to be the far more feasible option.

7.1.2. The Continuity of Tamil Separatism and its Lingering Effect

The question of whether or not the LTTE had any impact upon participants' decision to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations is one which only applies during the mid-war period of contemporary Sri Lanka. However with this thesis' scope of the contemporary transcending the mid-war period so as to also incorporate four years of the post-war period, a further question was required in order to assess any impact that Tamil separatist ideology continues to press upon the Sri Lankan Hindu community pertaining to their involvement with inter-religious peace organizations. This research has already posited that despite the dissolution of the LTTE, Tamil separatist ideology may still have a foothold amongst Sri Lankan Tamils, and therefore also the Sri Lankan Hindu community. Such is argued upon acknowledging, amongst other considerations, various attempts to rekindle the LTTE which have been previously documented in the third chapter of this thesis. Having beforehand considered the possibility that the presence of the LTTE could have exerted pressure to rebuke efforts of inter-religious peace organization, could not the survival of Tamil separatism amongst Sri Lankan Tamils possibly entail that this same pressure could have been maintained, albeit though to perhaps a lesser degree? With the absence of the LTTE, presumably any pressure from advocates of Tamil separatism amongst the post-war Sri Lankan Tamil community would be much less pronounced due to the lack of an organized framework akin to the LTTE.

Nevertheless depending on the extent to which Tamil separatist ideology continues to pervade the Sri Lankan Tamil community, if it is of significant enough stature, then perhaps it would warrant Sri Lankan Hindus to regard certain repercussions should they consider becoming involved with inter-religious peace efforts in a post-war context.

I am primarily referring here to a possible threat of violence that could confront those Sri Lankan Hindus who would become involved with inter-religious peace organizations, issued by militant advocates loyal to the cause of Tamil separatism. Indeed though without the LTTE, perhaps there would be no one to realistically enforce a threat of this sort. However one ought to remain open to the possibility that if Tamil separatism continues to thrive in a post-war context, perhaps its supporters would have been driven 'underground' by the collapse of the LTTE and the current military dominance of the Sri Lankan State's Armed Forces (SLA), and could therefore still pose a clandestine threat to their ethnic compatriots who could be regarded as acting against their ideals. Moreover in light of the analysis from the previous section of this chapter, if Tamil separatist ideology maintains a significant enough presence in a post-war context then those Hindus who had sympathized with the LTTE during the mid-war period may still shun inter-religious peace organizations, as their hopes may still be invested in the viability of the separatist vision. In either case, the post-war continuity of Tamil separatist ideology could theoretically extend an influence over the decisions of Sri Lankan Hindus regarding their prospective involvement with inter-religious peace organizations. Accordingly Interview Question Seventeen asked of participants firstly if they believe Tamil separatist ideology to be a significant presence in the post-war context, and secondly

if it has in any way affected their prospects of working with inter-religious peace organizations since the conclusion of the Sri Lankan Civil War. What follows now is an analysis of participant responses to this question.

Of the total twenty-eight participants, it would seem that only one – Participant 25 – regarded Tamil separatist ideology to be a virtually nonexistent force in post-war Sri Lanka, stating that 'today it is a fading dream among Tamils' (P25/2013/WP). A further two of the twenty-eight interviewed, Participants 8 and 15, admitted that they were unsure as to the current popularity of Tamil separatism amongst Sri Lankan Tamils (P8/2013/NCP & P15/2013/NWP). What remains then are 89% of participants who claimed to confirm that Tamil separatist ideology has retained support from Sri Lankan Tamils, albeit to varying extents. Some participants reported that it continues to appeal to vast numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils, whilst others seemed to indicate that it is in fact only a minority who would still subscribe to this view. Regarding the former, such amounted to 29% of total participants, comprising Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 12, 13, 19 and 28. Six of these participants also included in their responses reasoning as to why they believed Tamil separatism continues to flourish amongst Sri Lankan Tamils, with Participant 1 for example attributing its post-war survival to the war itself 'because of what happened there. The government will not accept any guilt for its part in the war, and this makes people angry' (P1/2013/WP). Contention between Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sri Lankan Government in fact appears also according to Participant 10, of why Tamil separatism retains a significant following amongst Tamils. Participant 10 argues that 'Tamil separatism will always be present because the government are not willing to change' (P10/2013/WP).

However whilst Participant 1 seems to be suggesting that the present Tamil grievances with the Government which fuel continued separatist loyalty is more a matter of evasive justice, Participant 10 appears to have determined the cause to instead be dissatisfaction with persistent State policy which is contrary to the interest of Sri Lankan Tamils. It is a subtle distinction, though a distinction nonetheless; yet in either case the essence of each argument ascribes a continuous and popular appeal of Tamil separatism to perceived transgressions of the Sri Lankan polity. Participants 5 and 13 however provided an alternative rationale to the sustained magnetism of Tamil separatist ideology, without identifying any clash between the Government and the Tamil community as the catalyst. Instead these two participants allude to the general belligerence between Sinhala and Tamils ethnic groups as causal, with Participant 13 stating that 'The Sinhala still do not really want us here, so why should Tamils want to stay?' (P13/2013/NWP), and Participant 5 claiming that 'the war created many more troubles between Sinhala and Tamils. I wish this was not so, but it is difficult to know how to resolve this thinking' (P5/2013/CP). Though Participant 13 alone allocates the blame solely upon the Sinhala, both Participants 13 and 5 observe Tamil separatist ideology as maintaining a significant presence during the post-war context as a consequence of ongoing hostilities between Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities. Of course the Tamil disputes with governmental practice in Sri Lanka is not entirely divorced from the wider confrontation between Sinhala and Tamil communities; as a matter of fact, it is largely built upon it due to the influence of Sinhala ethnonationalism here which respectively elevates Sinhala and Tamils to positions of primacy and subordination.

Participant 2 also comments on this perpetuated contentious dynamic between Sinhala and Tamil peoples, yet distils its essence to be the perceived Sinhala discrimination against Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. Participant 2 then offers this as the principal reason compelling Tamils to continue allying themselves to the separatist cause as the 'only effective escape from Sinhala prejudice' (P2/2013/WP). Participant 2 had during their interview also provided an earlier response to question nine of the interview script which accused the Sri Lankan Government of 'racism' against Tamils (P2/2013/WP). It is possible then to understand this 'Sinhala prejudice' identified by Participant 2 as having infiltrated Sri Lanka's political leadership. Participant 2's response to Interview Question Seventeen in a sense then marries the feuding between Tamil and Sinhala ethnic groups, with the enmity between the State and the Tamil community by proposing that the latter arises from and is informed by the former. It seems credible to argue then that both these Tamil-State and Tamil-Sinhala conflict paradigms could be considered as equally valid occasions for a continuing support of Tamil separatism because of their interrelated nature. Though they had also declared Tamil separatism to be a significant force in post-war Sri Lanka, Participant 28 nevertheless proposes that this support is comparatively lesser than what was notable during the Civil War. Participant 28 cites the reason for this to be that 'After the defeat of the LTTE, many of their supporters began leaving Sri Lanka to go to Canada and other places' (P28/2013/WP). In fact, among those who contradistinctly argued that advocacy for Tamil separatist ideology in post-war Sri Lanka is now either only somewhat of a significant force or indeed not much of one at all, a preponderant justification for this decline in support is attributed to the migration of Tamils to Western nations.

Participants 4, 7, 16, 18, 22 and 26 all agreed that Tamil separatism is not much of a significant force in post-war Sri Lanka. Participants 22 and 26 claim that this is ultimately a result of its chief protagonists – namely, the LTTE – as having been either defeated (P22/2013/WP) or its proponents killed during the Civil War (P26/2013/WP) respectively. Participants 16 and 18 are also in agreement on this, stating that the destruction of the LTTE is at least one of the factors contributing to the dwindling support of Tamil separatist ideology (P16/2013/NWP & P18/2013/CP). However Participants 16 and 18 are also united with Participants 4 and 7 in the opinion that advocacy of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka also has diminished due to many who had supported it migrating overseas. In terms of where expressly abroad these individuals have relocated, Participant 28 had identified Canada as one such destination, and it would seem that the responses of other participants do mirror this to a marked extent (P28/2013/WP). Of the above participants who posited that Tamil separatism is no longer a significant force in Sri Lanka, Participants 7 and 16 both claim Canada as a location to which many endorsers of Tamil separatism have now relocated (P7/2013/WP & P16/2013/NWP). Participant 4 similarly reported Tamil migrants supportive of Tamil separatism as having emigrated to Canada, specifically identifying though the city of Toronto as their locale (P4/2013/CP). In addition to Canada, Participants 4, 7 and 18 all acknowledged the United Kingdom as another such location, with Participants 4 and 18 specifying London in particular. What is also of especial interest here is the way in which Participants 4 and 7 claim that these expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils continue to uphold their allegiance to Tamil separatist ideology within their current non-Sri Lankan contexts.

The largest proportion of total participants however did neither suggest that post-war adhesion for Tamil separatism is a popular trend, nor did they determine it to be so faint a voice that it is almost inaudible. Rather this 39%[63] professed a perspective which mediates each of these contradistinct extremities, stating that allegiance to Tamil separatism is indeed noticeable among some Tamils, though by no means are these sensibilities shared by a great many of them. Yet within this particular grouping of participants there appears repeatedly again the consideration that the current support bases of Tamil separatism are to be found largely external to Sri Lanka, citing the exact same locales as other participants. Participants 9 and 27 both claimed that sustained allegiance to Tamil separatism is more of an issue for Sri Lankan Tamils who have migrated to London and Toronto, than currently is for those Tamils still residing in Sri Lanka (P9/2013/NCP & P27/2013/WP). Participant 9 also appears to suggest here that the reason for this is that faithful supporters of Tamil separatism had fled Sri Lanka to evade Governmental retribution. Participants 11 and 23 were less location specific than were Participants 9 and 27, stating instead that the UK or Canada are the general destinations where the mainstay of Tamil separatist supporters have now taken root. Participant 11 interestingly answered that 'Yes there are still some who believe this, but most of these do not want to fight to get a homeland anymore. Instead they move abroad for a better life in Canada or England' (P11/2013/WP).

Participant 11 seems here to be articulating that the majority of those still loyal to Tamil separatism who have since migrated to Western nations, have effectively abandoned all intentions for further armed insurrection to achieve these ends.

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[63] Specifically Participants 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24 and 27.

Instead it seems that these individuals have, according to Participant 11, retreated from Sri Lanka to enjoy a purportedly higher quality of living offered by the UK or Canada[64]. Note also that Participant 23 claimed that those who remain supportive of the Tamil separatist cause nevertheless are, in their words, unlikely to 'do anything about this now' after the ultimate failure of the LTTE (P23/2013/NWP). Employing a methodology which sought to encompass supplementary data from additional contextualized sources, during the course of my field research in Sri Lanka I had purchased several national newspapers with articles that seemed pertinent to the interview data I was beginning to amass. One such article alleged that a notorious female LTTE quartermaster had been granted residence in the UK, a nation 'where other LTTE fronts smoothly carry on their terrorist funding, brushing shoulders with British MPs' (Waduge 2013). Another article in a later issue of this same newspaper, the Sri Lankan *Daily News*, alludes to active LTTE cells predominately operating in London, but which is nevertheless affiliated to a larger global network that spans Canada, Australia, Norway and Tamil Nadu. It also anonymously accuses this overseas LTTE network of coordinating a propaganda campaign against the Sri Lankan Government to advance sympathies for the Tamil separatist cause, with the London chapter at the forefront of the operation (Special Correspondent[65] 2013).

The initial *Daily News* article referenced above also supposes the existence of an international human trafficking and narcotics trade under direction of this LTTE network as means of funding their cause. Specifically this correspondent alludes to LTTE activity in the UK and Canada, even quoting a Canadian MP who claimed that

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[64] As is confirmed firstly in the work of Rutter with regards to the UK (Rutter 2015: 159), and additional in the work of Van Hear concerning the Canadian diaspora of Sri Lankan Tamils (Van Hear 2013: 237).
[65] Presumably the identity of this journalist was hidden due to possible concerns for their safety, given the content of the article.

individuals with known LTTE connections have attempted migration to Canada (Waduge 2013). With a major national newspaper such as the *Daily News* continually emphasizing a supposed presence of active LTTE 'terrorist' cells in Western nations, particularly it seems in the UK, it is yet unclear whether participants were because of ethnic community bonds aware of Tamil separatist supporters in places such as the UK or Canada, or whether they are simply reiterating what they have gleaned from mass media sources without corroboration. Indeed it must be acknowledged that anything reported by *Daily News* with regards to Tamil separatism should not be accepted without further corroboration, for as I became a regular reader during my stay in Sri Lanka, it became apparent that the *Daily News* patently leans towards a nationalist allegiance. Such became evident primarily through the obsequious language used during the habitual praise of the Government and its armed forces (Kurugala 2013). In addition to this, the *Daily News'* outright incensed opposition to the Sri Lankan leadership being brought before a war crimes tribunal further depicts the newspaper as adopting a nationalistic pro-Governmental stance (Polkotuwa 2013). Perhaps that is why the *Daily News* seemed so keen to emphasize a link between the LTTE remnants and the UK, with key media sources claiming to document human rights violations committed by the Sri Lankan Government having been produced in the UK[66].

Yet whilst a newspaper's political partiality can at times entail a degree of exaggeration or perspective imbalance that is not to say that the entirety of its veracity is as such compromised. The July 18th 2013 edition of the *Daily News* recounts a recent incident occurring at a cricket stadium in the UK, where so-called

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[66] Namely the Channel 4 documentaries 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields', 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields: War Crimes Unpunished' and 'No Fire Zone: The Killing Fields of Sri Lanka'.

'Tamil Tiger activists' were seen to have committed a politically motivated assault against Sinhala spectators (Fernando 2013). This episode was also documented by a plethora of British media sources from across the spectrum of political allegiances, including *The Guardian*, BBC news and *The Daily Mail*. Scholars have also identified the presence of Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates in the UK as having continued sympathies for the cause of Tamil separatism (Balasunderam 2009: 36). Additionally, academic researchers have uncovered similar instances of continued separatist loyalties amongst migrant Sri Lankan Tamils in a Canadian context (Thurairajah 2011: 135). Given then that academic studies and a variety of additional non-Sri Lankan media sources appear to confirm post-Civil War LTTE activity in both Canada and the UK, the participant claim that the remaining advocates of Tamil separatism are a feature largely particular to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community seems ultimately verified. Note that why participant responses here only alluded to Canada and the UK, and not to other locales of supposed LTTE continuity such as Australia or Norway, may be due to a number of reasons. I would suggest that perhaps a combination of the researcher's nationality alongside the Sri Lankan national media appearing to portray the UK, and London in particular, as the nucleus for lingering Tamil separatist support. With regards to identifying Canada, and in particular Toronto, it may simply be a result of Toronto being home to the largest Sri Lankan Tamil community within the diaspora (Cheran 2004: 9).

Accordingly with the majority of participants doubting that continued loyalties towards Tamil separatist ideology is of significant stature within a post-war Sri Lankan context, it could be problematic to accept that it is as a contrasting participant minority would have one believe. Further to this, no single participant reported that

they considered any Tamil separatist enclaves remaining in post-war Sri Lanka as a determinative factor in their decision regarding prospective involvement with inter-religious peace organizations. Such only reinforces the probability of Tamil separatism as being only a diminutive force in the post-war environ, for at its height during the LTTE insurgency many participants previously admitted that their prospects of working with inter-religious peace organization were affected by its proponents. Nevertheless this data yield has itself evidenced that there are still those in Sri Lanka who do remain supportive of Tamil separatist ideology. Participants 2, 5, 10 and 12 had all stated previously that they had pledged their sympathies with the LTTE during the Sri Lankan Civil War, and that this had prevented them from working with inter-religious peace organizations as was explained earlier. These same participants would additionally answer that they have maintained their support of Tamil separatist ideology following the collapse of the LTTE and the cessation of the Civil War. Each of these participants also revealed that their enduring protagonism of Tamil separatism continues to impact upon their prospects of involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, citing again an ideological clash between these organizations and the Tamil separatist agenda.

Interestingly though Participant 19, who had not previously professed support of the LTTE during the Civil War, proposed that their current sensibilities are inclined towards an endorsement of the Tamil separatism which they claim is still a significant force in Sri Lanka. Participant 19's exact reply to Interview Question Seventeen was 'There are still many Tamils that support the idea of separation, especially in the North. I would say that this idea has greater potential to make Tamils happy and safe in Sri Lanka than anything these organizations do, so I would not come to work with

them' (P19/2013/SP). From this it is clear that Participant 19's prospective engagement with inter-religious peace organizations is hampered by a current advocacy of Tamil separatism, on account of the latter being perceived as able to manifest an ultimately more favourable outcome for the Tamil community of which Participant 19 is a part. Participant 19's perspective is in this sense identical to Participants 2, 5, 10 and 12. For example Participant 10's response was that 'Yes many do. Tamil separatism will always be present because the government are not willing to change. To break away from this seems the only choice that Tamils have for liberation, and that is something these organizations cannot give us, so I could not help them' (P10/2013/WP), and Participant 5 replied with 'Yes of course, it still has a lot of supporters. The Sinhala still do not really want us here, so why should Tamils want to stay? These organizations only want us to stay here where we are vulnerable to oppression. I would not want to be part of them for this reason' (P5/2013/CP).

Where it seems then that any protracted post-war support for Tamil separatism affects Sri Lankan Hindu involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, is where certain Hindus are themselves supportive of this ideology. Among those encountered during the course of this field research, such a standpoint appeared only applicable in a minority of cases, with only five of the total twenty-eight participants professing post-war support for Tamil separatism. After reviewing all participant responses to Interview Question Seventeen, it did not seem that those who continued to advocate Tamil separatism constituted so much of a significant force in post-war Sri Lanka. This was suggested by not a single participant stating that this post-war continuity of Tamil separatist advocacy has affected their decision

to work with inter-religious peace organizations, whereas during the mid-war period where it was undeniably a significant force, many participants had admitted to the contrary. Participant 16 was one such example, as was Participant 27, who divulged that proponents of Tamil separatism during the Civil War – namely, the LTTE – epitomized a threatening presence to those considering involvement with inter-religious peace organizations. Nevertheless these same participants stated that since the cessation of the Civil War, there has been so far no such threat when considering involvement during the post-war context. One may infer from this then that Tamil separatist support has dwindled significantly since the Civil War's end to the point of being rendered of little concern to those it had previously affected. However whilst such may be applicable in Sri Lankan national context, the responses of participants appeared to suggest that in other national contexts, such as the UK and Canada, Tamil separatism is comparatively a far more significant force elsewhere than it now is in Sri Lanka.

7.1.3. Hindu Values and the Tamil Separatist Campaign

All twenty-eight participants interviewed indicated on Interview Question One that they were of Tamil ethnicity, though interestingly none provided any specification as to whether they consider themselves an 'Indian' or 'Ceylon' Tamil. Perhaps they may have assumed that an outsider such as myself would be confused by or uninterested in such technical discrepancies; or perhaps even this delineation is of little import to these participants at least or even the Tamil community at large. Regardless though, it is imperative to note that all participants were religiously Hindu, and also entirely

ethnically Tamil. One will have noted previously in Chapter 4 that the ethnic facet of Sri Lankan Hindu identity is nigh invariably Tamil, and with regards to the prospects of Sri Lankan Hindu engagement to inter-religious peace efforts, such could theoretically complicate amenable interaction in a binary manner. Firstly, it was discussed that the presence of the LTTE – a militant movement arising amongst Sri Lankan Tamils – could have intimidated Sri Lankan Hindus from engaging with inter-religious peace efforts. Already during the course of this chapter, the validity of this conjecture has been uncovered as many participants had divulged that the LTTE had seemed a threatening presence if one was to consider working with inter-religious peace organizations. Yet alongside this, the discourse within Chapter 4 also suggested that due to the Tamil ethnicity of most if not all Sri Lankan Hindus, such could entail that members of this community could thus have sympathized with the Tamil separatist cause and therefore avoided inter-religious peace organizations due to its conflicting aims with this ideology. Again the data so far analysed in this chapter has demonstrated the accuracy of this consideration, albeit for a minority of participants.

Chapter 4 had noted that the theory underpinning the viability of inter-religious peace work hinges upon the postulation that at the 'heart' of all world religions is the desire for harmonious human interaction and an ultimate distaste for violence. However in response to this, I had argued that in light of the Hindu tradition such may be an unbalanced view at best, with a multitude of its primary sacred sources espousing an ethic which seemingly sanctifies warfare and violence of a certain kind. Accordingly where the ethnic dimension of Sri Lankan Hindu identity could arouse particular political sensibilities which allied them with the LTTE, perhaps the religious

component itself may have similarly accrued support for the Tamil separatist mission. If this proved to be so then it would radically challenge this core assumption of inter-religious peace efforts, whilst simultaneously probing the pertinence of its application in context. The final question asked of participants, Interview Question Eighteen, sought opinions on how it was that the LTTE had managed to acquire support from certain Sri Lankan Hindus. The intention behind this question was to expose if the religious aspect of these Sri Lankan Hindus' identity had any bearing upon their support of militant Tamil separatism, or whether it was a political matter related entirely to their Tamil ethnicity that inspired such. Of the total participant responses, all twenty-eight provided an answer, with 54%[67] stating that those Sri Lankan Hindus that had supported the LTTE did so for the sole reason of their ethnicity. Typical of such responses, Participant 9 for example replied 'Some Hindus supported the LTTE because they were Tamil; it was as simple as that' (P9/2013/NCP), whilst Participant 16 stated 'The LTTE wanted support from all Tamils, it did not matter what religion they were, and the Tamil Hindus gave their support only for political reasons' (P16/2013/NWP).

As anticipated then, the ethnicity of Sri Lankan Hindus was key in enabling some of their number to identify with the Tamil ethnonationalist LTTE. Among those aforementioned fifteen participants who articulated this, a small number of them overtly suggested that of those Sri Lankan Hindus who had sympathized with the LTTE, should they have fully acknowledged their religious allegiance they would have realized an incompatibility between LTTE activity and Hinduism. Participant 6's response was that though Hindus did become active supporters of the LTTE,

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[67] Participants 1, 2, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26.

'Hinduism teaches an appreciation of life and does not praise what harmful things they have done' (P6/2013/WP). Like Participant 6, Participants 24 and 25 also claim that the actions of the LTTE violate Hindu standards of ethics. Participant 24 argued that 'They supported the LTTE as Tamils, not so much as Hindus. Yes, Hinduism sometimes allows for war but I don't think these people were thinking as Hindus because they did not fight purely. Instead they happily killed women and little children, and also people who didn't even want to be a part of the fighting' (P24/2013/NWP). Participant 25 likewise explained that 'The LTTE were mostly Hindu because Tamils are mostly Hindu, so they joined over Tamil issues and not Hindu ones. The teachings of Hinduism would not allow their actions because so many good Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim people died from them' (P25/2013/NWP). The responses of Participants 24 and 25 clearly differ somewhat from Participant 6's in that whereas Participant 6 seems to rebuke the LTTE's violent acts absolutely, Participants 24 and 25 appear only to condemn violence committed against the undeserving or innocent. Evidently Hinduism's multifaceted and relatively heterogeneous nature has affected participants' rendering of Hindu war ethics with the arising of divergent perspectives within these answers.

To an extent then both the responses of Participant 6 and those of Participants 24 and 25 appear validly 'Hindu' in character, for as was expounded in Chapter 4, there exists within Hinduism a certain dichotomy in the ethics of war where both the validation and abhorrence of violence coexist. Yet where militancy is permitted in Hindu thought, Participants 24 and 25 seem to suggest that there are nonetheless conditions emplaced upon the appropriate use of violence; specifically, according to these participants, that violence is not permitted where it endangers the innocent. In

contrast to Participant 6, the responses of Participants 24 and 25 appear to more closely resemble the 'classical' Hindu paradigm regarding the ethics of war, as this opinion is very much reminiscent of the notion of '*danda*' or 'controlled force' which stipulates that a prerequisite for the use of military force is prior aggression (Roy 2012: 28). In other words, war in classical Hindu thought can only be legitimized if used as a means of self-defence, implying that one cannot therefore commit acts of violence against the innocent. Participant 6's suggestion of total non-violence on the other hand seems representative of Hinduism's later accretions which take the classical relativity of the non-violent principle and reinterprets it to apply on a ubiquitous scale (Doniger 2013: 136). A typical exemplar of this mode of Hindu thought would be 'Mahatma' Gandhi. It is perhaps cogent then to regard the responses of Participants 24 and 25 to be the more 'orthodox' opinion, although Hinduism's berth is such that it today appears to validly encompass either of these responses (Young 2004: 286).

Thus far then it seems that participant responses indicate that the religious aspect of Sri Lankan Hindu identity has not contributed to the support received by militant Tamil separatism from members within this community. Conversely, the suggestions of some participants have argued that the religious affiliation of Sri Lankan Hindus should have been preventative in this regard, with the LTTE having allegedly acted contrary to Hindu ethical sensibilities. Yet alongside those fifteen participants who credited Sri Lankan Hindu support of militant Tamil separatism entirely to the ethnic component of their identity, a further nine participants similarly acknowledged the ethnicity of Sri Lankan Hindus as allowing for support of the LTTE's Tamil ethnonationalist militancy. However in contrast to the former fifteen, these nine

participants did not attribute ethnic allegiance as the sole rationale for Sri Lankan Hindu sympathy with the LTTE. Instead they posited the notion that several factors were present which had inspired Sri Lankan Hindus to identify with militant Tamil separatism. Foremost amongst these interestingly, were incentives related to the religious dimension of Sri Lankan Hindu identity. Participants 5, 8, 19, 21, 27 and 28 – six of the nine participants identified above – all claimed that alongside political considerations related to ethnicity, the religious beliefs of certain Sri Lankan Hindus provided an additional means of justifying support for the LTTE. The essence of each participant response of this kind was that Hinduism provides a moral template in which a dynamic of 'good vs. evil' leads to a justification of violent acts for the former to overcome the latter. Participant 8 for example stated 'Some supported the LTTE because they wanted revenge on the Sinhala for persecuting Tamils, and others because they wanted to be blessed by fighting against the ungodly for their crimes against Hindus' (P8/2013/NCP).

Participant 8 seems here to be suggesting that some Hindus felt vindicated in taking military action against the Sri Lankan State because of the alleged contemptible treatment of Hindus, and that by pursuing this one becomes in a respect sanctified. The response of Participant 5 included a similar claim, where they explained 'The LTTE offered protection for Sri Lankan Hindus because they were Tamils. The LTTE had Murugan's blessings in their deeds because they fought to protect life from the hatred of the Sinhala Buddhist' (P5/2013/CP). In contrast to Participant 8 though, Participant 5 is here specifying a deity from which this same blessing is imparted to those who would fight against the Sri Lankan State. Murugan, known alternatively as Skanda or Kartikeya, is the tutelary deity of the Tamil people as was discussed in

Chapter 4. Moreover Chapter 4 also documented how Murugan is a deity associated with warfare, as in Hindu mythology he is presented as commander-in-chief of the celestial host, while scholars have analogously represented Murugan as the Indian equivalent of the Roman Mars or Greek Ares (Mann 2012: 142). Where then Participant 5 claims that some Sri Lankan Hindus considered fighting with the LTTE against the Sri Lankan State as an act amounting to the acquisition of Murugan's grace, it is patently clear as to why this theology may have arisen given the particular nature of this deity. With Murugan being the presiding deity over Tamils, as well as being one in mythic narrative who sanctions and partakes in violence against bellicose wrongdoers, the belief that Murugan would ordain violent behaviour that preserves the wellbeing of his charge is one which would develop almost indubitably.

In a sense then these Hindus were attempting to emulate Murugan, for as he is duty-bound to protect the Hindu pantheon from *adharmic* forces, these individuals were attempting to protect the 'righteous' from perceived destruction. Beholding narrative accounts of Hindu deities as ethically pertinent in this manner was also divulged by Participant 28, for his response was that 'It was mostly a racial attraction to their cause, but the LTTE did also at times use stories of gods and heroes from Hinduism to attract support' (P28/2013/WP). Participant 28 then continues by providing the example of how 'the stories of Goddess Kāli would be used to make killing enemies a worthy thing to do, especially because these enemies were not Hindu' (P28/2013/WP). Participant 28's claim that the figure of Kāli had been evoked to garner support for LTTE activity is a further example of warlike Hindu deities being depicted as models of righteous conduct with regards to the ethics of war. Like Murugan, Kāli is a deity portrayed in mythological narrative with a primary utility of

slaying various 'demonic' enemies of the Hindu pantheon (Foulston & Abbot 2009: 37), and it would seem that this had been understood as justification for battling those who would contravene the moral order. But Participant 28 also adds that this was easily achieved, due to the non-Hindu nature of the LTTE's enemy. Perhaps then the generally non-Hindu constituency of the Sri Lankan State polarized them from the LTTE, allowing for some form of 'righteous-unrighteous' dynamic between Hindus and non-Hindus to be transposed upon this existing discrepancy. Also inferred here is that any such analogy drawn between the socio-political discord in Sri Lanka and Hindu mythic narrative was the result of LTTE agency. In other words it is suggested that the LTTE were responsible for manipulating Hindu sacred narratives in this way to accrue support, rather than those Hindus external to the organization having attained this conclusion without coercion.

Participant 28, whilst agreeing with Participants 5 and 8 with regards to the certain deity narratives as being utilized to proliferate support for the LTTE, also states that stories involving so-called 'heroes' of Hinduism were appropriated in the same respect. Participant 19's response to Interview Question Eighteen appears to supplement this consideration, where it states 'With Sri Lankan Hindus being Tamils also, it was obvious that they would have support from them. But Hinduism also has religious stories about superior men like King Rāma who fight for justice and to destroy evil, and some Hindu peoples saw them like that' (P19/2013/SP). It has been explained in Chapter 4 how the heroism and rectitude of Rāma is highly regarded by Hindus on nigh ubiquitous scale, contributing to his lingering popular status as a moral exemplar. The response of Participant 19 is coherent with this insomuch as it claims that mythic figures such as Rāma function, at least to a certain extent, as

exemplary models of moral practice amongst Sri Lankan Hindus. Participant 19's response also posits that the LTTE soldiers were likened to such figures due to a perceived analogous similarity, as the LTTE appeared to emulate these mythic heroes by combating a perceived tyrannical power. In this sense then Hindu mythology regarding mortal heroes such as Rāma had been interpreted in much the same way as those concerning deity narratives, namely to justify the LTTE's armed insurrection against the Sri Lankan State by analogously transposing mythic 'good vs. evil' narrative paradigm upon this existing socio-political conflict dynamic. Yet where Participant 28 appeared to accredit total agency to the LTTE with regards to reconstructing Hindu myth in this way, Participant 19 on the other hand does not seems to imply the culpability of the LTTE in such.

Participant 19 states that 'some Hindu peoples' viewed LTTE cadres as mirroring the heroes of Hindu myth, and so it remains ambiguous whether or not LTTE propaganda can be further acknowledged as the catalyst for developing this analogy. However Participant 19 was not the sole participant among this group to identify the appropriation of heroic figures from Hindu myth to grant righteous appeal to the LTTE, as both Participants 21 and 27 mentioned this at least as part of their respective answers. Where Participant 21 firstly replied with 'Yes but only because the LTTE had convinced them they should as they were also Tamils, but also by stating that Hinduism praises brave warriors who fight to defend their people from demonic forces. They made the government sound like these evil powers, and so these men and women would want to kill them' (P21/2013/WP), one may observe that not only had the mythic righteous warrior ideal lent itself to consolidating the LTTE's claim of legitimacy, but that agency is here once again attributed to the LTTE

itself as exploiting Hindu myth for this purpose. Participant 27's response similarly identifies that Hindu mythic narrative had been appropriated by the LTTE to bolster support for their cause, for they reported that 'Many Hindus joined the LTTE because they are Tamils, and they believed in the political cause. But they also joined to earn honour for fighting bravely as soldiers. Hinduism worships gods and great warriors who fight for good reasons, to destroy wicked persons who oppress with greed and anger. These Hindus wanted to be righteous like them, men like Murugan and women like goddess Kāli, by fighting a corrupt government' (P27/2013/WP).

Participant 28 recognizes then that Hindu myths concerning both heroes and deities were manipulated in such a way to represent the then current struggle between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government which favours the former. However like Participant 19, Participant 27's reply retains a certain ambiguity regarding the source of such manipulation as it does not attribute this to the LTTE, but does instead only suggest that this mode of thought was simply present amongst some Hindus. Though what is unique to Participant 27's response and also markedly poignant is the way in which the gender of deities was significant within the reconstruction of Hindu myth. Participant 27 seems to imply that the masculinity of Murugan afforded him appeal to male Hindus, whereas the gender of Kāli allows for female Hindus to discover a sense of association. Note that I was somewhat apprehensive to state above that the 'femininity' of Kāli entailed that she received identification from female Hindus, and such is due to Hinduism traditionally featuring an 'essentialist' definition of gender roles (Kuumba 2001: 10). The figure of Kāli is radically divergent, perhaps even outright contradictory, to the archetypical normative traits of the female according to Hindu tradition and so does not exhibit 'femininity' as it is here

understood. During Chapter 2 it became evident that within classical Hinduism, females are defined by a demure and subjugated essential existence, which is in stark contrast to the character of Kāli who Kinsley describes as ferocious, wild and uninhibited (Kinsley 1988: 116). The discourse of Chapter 2 also articulated that Tamil society has conventionally adhered to classical Hindu thought in this respect, with women expected to conform to this traditional inhibited subordination.

Evidently though with the figure of Kāli being utilized in a manner so as to inspire militant support for LTTE amongst female Sri Lankan Hindus[68], classical Brahminical Hinduism appears to perhaps exert ultimately little influence upon contemporary expressions of Hinduism in Sri Lanka. I would argue this so far on the basis that the dictates of Brahminical orthodoxy have been flouted firstly by women attempting to emulate Kāli, and secondly how this has allegedly inspired them to take up arms. Brahmanism not only delineates female behavioural standards which are essentially domestically-bound, but it also seeks to prevent women from engaging in warfare due to the stipulations of *varnāśramadharma* which conclude that such is only permissible for men of a particular social stratum (Chakraborty 2003: 18). Further to this however, it would appear that the rationale of specifically male or even general Hindu involvement with the LTTE on religious grounds according to participants is suggestive of an absence of Brahminical influence. In Chapter 4 I had previously considered that Sri Lankan Hindus may have consulted the Brahminical framework to justify support for the LTTE campaign, as historically it is understood that this application of Hinduism has been the predominant interpretation, hence it acquiring

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[68] Note that a similar phenomenon may be observed among the 'Sangh Parivar', a cluster of related militant Hindu nationalist organizations in contemporary India, who provide 'training camps' for female supporters in which they are expected to cultivate confrontational personalities in imitation of the warrior-Goddess Durga (Madhok 2013: 68).

the distinction of 'orthodoxy'. However participant responses have made no such direct connection to Brahmanism with regards to how contextual Sri Lankan Hindus began considering the appropriateness of war. Instead it seems popular myths were the reference point, which though themselves are replete with references to Brahmanism, do not seem to have been interpreted in a manner which grants any pre-eminence to the orthodox system.

The *Rāmāyana* for example is an epic poem which is built upon a Brahminical framework by virtue of its intentional promotion of Brahminical ideals (Rao 2001: 162). The figure of Rāma, being the chief protagonist of the tales is the focal point of the narrative and within such therefore is represented as an exemplar according to classical Hindu or Brahminical moral standards. However participant responses here have not portrayed Rāma as exemplary for his fealty to the Brahminical model of Hinduism. Rather, such has been characterized by understanding Rāma as representing simply righteous conduct insomuch as he wages a crusade against Rāvana as the embodiment of perceived reprehensible traits, with Participant 19 claiming that Rāma is exalted plainly due his decision to 'fight for justice and to destroy evil' (P19/2013/SP). Interpreting the *Rāmāyana* on more simplified essential manner is not an unusual modern development, for in 1979 the Southall Black Sisters charity produced a theatrical adaptation of the Rāmāyana which appropriated the distilled 'good vs. evil' dynamic of the narrative to allow for contextual social conflict dynamics to be simultaneously explored (Richman 1999: 41). These participant responses ostensibly suggest then that although religious mythological narratives such as this remain popular amongst Sri Lankan Hindus, many are not reading these through the classical Brahminical lens. Whilst I had suggested in

Chapter 4 that Brahminical Hinduism may have offered justification or incentive for Sri Lankan Hindus to become either involved or support the LTTE due to the concept of *varnāśramadharma*, it would seem that this has not been the case because the Brahminical understanding of Hinduism seem to have been somewhat superseded by a Hinduism which is principally grounded in the radical reading of *smrti* mythic literature.

Though *smrti* mythic narratives are permeated with orthodox ideals, they appear to have been related to by some Sri Lankan Hindus in a way which downplays *varnāśramadharma* in place of deriving more general ethical principles upon perceived notions of good and evil, righteous and unrighteous, which incorporates the use of analogy. According to *varnāśramadharma* for example, women are to be excluded from martial practice and are conditioned into a docile domestic role. Yet Hinduism seems to have been interpreted by some in Sri Lanka, via *smrti* myth, in a manner which clearly pays no heed to orthodox ideology. As such, contrary to expectation, these participant responses suggest that adherence to the concept of *varnāśramadharma* is not something which had compelled Sri Lankan Hindus to support the LTTE. However where Participants 5, 8, 19, 21, 27 and 28 form a group which identified both ethno-political and religious rationales for Sri Lankan Hindu support of the LTTE, there were nevertheless a further smaller grouping of participants who provide solely religious justifications for the aforementioned. Participants 4, 10 and 13 each provided a response to Interview Question Eighteen which cited only a specific understand of Hinduism as that which led Sri Lankan Hindus to pledge their support with the LTTE. Participant 10's response firstly reiterates a position earlier encountered, namely that 'The LTTE was mostly Hindu,

and so people supported them because they were friends, fathers, brothers and sisters. Hinduism also teaches justice against hatred, and that's what the Tigers were fighting for' (P10/2013/WP). This notion that the LTTE were regarded as religiously sanctioned vindicators according to Hindu ethical sensibilities has already been observed within the responses of Participants 5, 8 and 19 for example. Regarding the latter of these, it was this perceived righteous defiance that contributed to the LTTE analogously reflecting the qualities of Hindu mythic heroes.

Participant 4 reported that 'Some traditional Hindus think it is a worthy job to become a soldier and fight in battle, like in *Mahābhārata* and old Tamil songs. They wanted the glory of defending their people's rights and so joined the LTTE' (P4/2013/CP). To a certain extent then, Participant 4's reply is not too dissimilar from Participant 10s in that they also identify the LTTE as being perceived as champions of the community by virtue of them confronting a supposed oppression. However in addition to this Participant 4 makes reference to the Hindu epic the *Mahābhārata*, claiming that this text appeared to some as glamorizing the martial life. Alongside this, Participant 4 acknowledges 'old Tamil songs' as similarly romanticizing the military profession. To clarify, Participant 4 explained that 'Tamils have for a long time written songs, or maybe you say poems, about the battlefield with brave men fighting for true causes and honour for them and their family' (P4/2013/CP). Upon returning from Sri Lanka, I began reading into Tamil literary culture to discover that this was most ostensibly an allusion to the illustrious 'Cankam' poetry that includes a sub-classification of '*puram*' verse of which the focus is epic war and heroism (Bose 2010: 130), which Young describes as ennobling excessive and callous violence (Young 2004: 283). Participant 4 seems to suggest that a combination of these textual sources

celebrating war and battlefield heroics provided an impetus for some Sri Lankan Hindus, delineated here as 'traditional', to become attracted towards enlisting with the LTTE. It is interesting that Participant 4 refers to such Hindus as 'traditional', as if these texts only appealed in this way to Hindus who are perhaps more conservative than others.

Lastly in this sub-grouping of participants, Participant 13 presented a response somewhat divergent from the previous two, where they stated 'Hinduism can inspire military action, but only for the sake of peace. What the LTTE were chasing would not bring peace, but only countless wars. Some thought that fighting for Tamil Eelam was the final answer to their troubles with the Sinhala because they did not see another way' (P13/2013/NWP). Participant 13's answer possesses the implication that the LTTE were perceived as 'freedom fighters' of a sort, given that it is suggested here that some Hindus supported them as a means of brokering community protection – hence a certain justification of the LTTE is implied here. Yet Participant 13 also identifies a Hindu ethical consideration supposedly underpinning this support of the LTTE where they mention 'Hinduism can inspire military action, but only for the sake of peace', and goes on to explain that certain Sri Lankan Hindus validated the LTTE on the basis that they determined the organization's armed struggle as ultimately undertaken to usher peace within Sri Lanka. Personally however, Participant 13 was patently sceptical of the LTTE insurrection being able to fulfil such expectations, as they commented that this mission would only ever amount to perpetuating conflict. Perhaps this then would explain why in Participant 13's eyes only 'some Hindus' were supportive of the LTTE, because if the principle that war may be sanctioned for the pursuit of peace is regarded, and if others

speculated like Participant 13 that peace would not likely come of this, then they could not ethically pledge allegiance to the LTTE campaign.

So far Participants 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 19, 21, 27 and 28 have all provided responses to Interview Question Eighteen which claim that the religious principles of certain Sri Lankan Hindus allowed for them to justify support for the LTTE. However there are a further two participants, Participants 7 and 18, who may also be added to this list, for their answer does in part concur with those of other participants in this category, although this particular participant also introduces another consideration regarding how some Sri Lankan Hindu came to identify with the LTTE. Participant 18's exact response to Interview Question Eighteen was 'Some Hindus think that war can be a holy duty against bad people, but this war has shown many that war is nothing but sadness. These Hindus joined the LTTE to become heroes by winning, or to be worshipped as martyrs if they died' (P18/2013/CP). Participant 7 on the other hand replied with 'For most Hindus supporting the LTTE was because of the oppression they felt as Tamils, but there is also the worship of noble fighters in poems and religious tales. Many young boys wanted this glory, and fighting the Sinhala gave them this chance. Even if they died doing this, they would still be worshipped as martyrs' (P7/2013/WP). Both of these responses provide an insight into religiously derived principles that had induced Sri Lankan Hindu support of the LTTE, namely that war against perceived villainy is justified within Hindu ethical thought in the case of Participant 18, and secondly that the veneration of mythic soldier figures provided an inspiration for contemporary Hindus to pursue martial opportunities according to Participant 7. Such are clearly not contributions unique to either of these participants,

as this analysis has previously revealed other participants as having submitted replies featuring similar content as this.

However, where the responses of Participants 7 and 18 do diverge from those already reviewed is at the point they declare the possibility of martyrdom as an additional incentive for Sri Lankan Hindus joining the LTTE. Moreover the remaining two participants yet to be covered in the analysis of this theme, Participants 3 and 11, each proffered responses to Interview Question Eighteen which postulates that martyrdom and the associated pursuit of martial repute granted appeal to the LTTE for a number of Sri Lankan Hindus. Firstly, Participant 3's response was that 'The LTTE targeted the Hindus because they are most of the Tamils. A lot of young men wanted to become war heroes like in the old stories, and so joined to get fame this way. Other Hindus were just angry at government policy, and the Tigers offered them a way to show this. Dying was not a problem either, because they would build a shrine for them and give thanks for their help' (P3/2013/CP). Participant 11 stated that 'Some Hindus joined the Tigers to defend Tamil rights, because they were also Tamils. But honour was also gained for you and your family if you fought or died for the LTTE' (P11/2013/WP). Like Participants 7 and 18 then, Participants 3 and 11 also specify that to pledge your support for the LTTE and enlist to join its military operations could only amount to a favourable conclusion, for if either survival or demise was the consequence, each would be eulogized as a courageous and therefore admirable act. Terms such as 'fame', 'honour' and 'glory' are employed here to describe the admiration gained for those dead or alive who had provided service to the LTTE, with the suggestion that such is a coveted acquisition for Sri Lankan Hindus.

The research of Derges corroborates that veracity of martyr veneration amongst the LTTE (Derges 2013: 75), as does the work of Pape & Feldman who also claims that such harboured the potential for inspiring Sri Lankan Tamils to take up arms even as the notorious 'Black Tigers' unit which specialized in 'suicide missions' pioneering the use of vests laden with explosive devices (Pape & Feldman 2010: 316). It is not an uncommon phenomenon among insurgency groups to venerate those who had lost their lives in pursuit of the movement's aims, as notably the 'suicide bombers' of the Palestinian Hamas who are termed as being of the '*shuhada* ' – meaning those who had died in the service of their faith – are granted a quasi-religious veneration for their military service (Levitt 2007: 85). Similarly the IRA's venerative treatment of 'Loughgall Martyrs' during the Troubles is something akin to this (Shanahan 2009: 182), as is the modern Sikh separatist movement the 'Khalistan Liberation Force' with its reverence of individuals such as Bhai Avtar Singh Brahma, the former head of the KLF until his assassination at the hands of forces loyal to the Indian State (Mahmood 2011: 47). The question then in relation to an apparent propensity among the Sri Lankan Hindu community to laud military service, of whether or not such is a result of their religious adherence appears at first glance perhaps somewhat unconvincing. The above cases suggest that the veneration of those that would sacrifice their lives is something inherent to militant movements regardless of the minutiae of creed or ideology, particularly as Stump postulates that such may be instigated ubiquitously amongst these organizations as a means of drawing support and thus furthering recruitment prospects (Stump 2004: 67).

It was always possible then that this veneration of martyrs and victors would extend to encompass the LTTE, although what is suggested above is that the Hindu beliefs of those that formed the mainstay of its forces might have been inconsequential in terms of generating this adoration. In spite of this however, I would argue that based upon participant responses, the Hindu belief structure of some LTTE cadres set within a Tamil cultural background had ensured that they were readily receptive to these 'warrior-cult' ideals. Numerous participants have divulged the existence of an acknowledgement amongst Sri Lanka Hindus that their religious mythology features deities and heroes which represent a strong martial ideal in the face of perceived malevolence, particularly the god Murugan who happens to be viewed by Sri Lankan Hindus as the patron of their community. In addition to this, certain participants have also commented on how Tamil culture is influenced by an artistic genre which romanticizes the martial lifestyle. I would propose that with these concepts already present within the general psyche of some Sri Lankan Hindus prior to the LTTE insurgency, once this movement began their separatist campaign such gave certain Sri Lankan Hindus who appreciated these sentiments an opportunity to assume such an exalted lifestyle. This would be analogous to the surge within military idealization in Imperial Japan during its early twentieth century campaigns, as the resurgent mytho-historical glamorization of the warrior persona within Japanese society according to the philosophy of '*bushido*' allowed for heightened martial aspirations to the point of self-expendability during the infamous '*kamikaze'* and '*banzai'* assaults (Reilly 2010: 9).

There was then according to participants a multitude of reasons that propelled certain Sri Lankan Hindus to offer their support to the LTTE. Chief among these were

sympathies with ethnopolitics of the LTTE on the basis of possessing Tamil ethnicity, with 86% of total participants offering this explanation as either the totality of their response or at least forming part of it. Additionally though many participants argued that factors other than political sentiments encouraged Sri Lankan Hindu support of the LTTE. 36% of the total number interviewed reported that the religious beliefs of some Sri Lankan Hindus assisted in convincing them to side with the LTTE. Finally a small 14% also alluded to a cultural appreciation of the martial lifestyle and an associated martyr veneration which enticed some Sri Lankan Hindus to pledge their allegiance to the LTTE as a means of acquiring this admiration. However what did become particularly apparent throughout the analysis of participant responses to Interview Question Eighteen was the seeming disunity of Hindu perspectives regarding the legitimacy of the LTTE's military operations. Participants 6, 24 and 25 for example reasoned that LTTE activity was in effect a breach of Hindu ethical standards. Contrastingly though a number of Sri Lankan Hindus considered LTTE activity to be in-line with Hindu ethics, and participants have most frequently described analogously referencing contemporary political confrontation within popular Hindu mythological narrative as the basis for this opinion.

Yet previous to conducting any field research, I had constructed a conjectural framework which now constitutes the main body of Chapter 4, within which it is proposed that the ethical dimension of the concept of *dharma* linked to caste duties in classical Hindu thought would have influenced Sri Lankan Hindu opinion on the LTTE. Following field data collection however, it appears that participant responses do not at all make any such allusion to adherence towards caste duty as having had an impact upon the Sri Lankan Hindu community's reception of the LTTE.

Hypothesizing in this way ignored the contextual schematics of Sri Lankan Hinduism in which this classical mode of Hindu thought has been superseded by the predominance of Tantric variants. Foremost among the trends of Hinduism practised in Sri Lanka is the 'Siva Siddhanta' tradition, which is a system which in practice appears to downplay caste ideology and instead emphasises ritualistic devotionalism as a means of fulfilling one's religious duties (Peterson 1991: 18). Experiences of temporarily residing amongst the Hindu population of Sri Lanka entailed that I came to the realization that while a model of social stratification may doubtlessly be observed within this community, such does not remotely resemble the orthodox *varna* system. Instead what is present equates to more the '*jāti'* system of modern India which features stratified endogamy and hereditary occupational expectations that seem influenced in principle by Hindu religious concepts but are not directly associated with them (Jacobs 2010: 60). Thus to begin acknowledging the relative absence of orthodox caste doctrine in contemporary Sri Lanka, it seems unrealistic to have expected such concepts to continue exerting so much influence over Hindu ethical discourse taking place there.

The religious demographics of contemporary Sri Lanka are such that the historical dominance of Brahmanism amongst Hindus has become supplanted by Saiva Siddhanta, which is of course a Tantric development of the Hindu tradition. Flood contends that Tantric variants of Hinduism generally can contain elements of thought and practice which would be considered iconoclastic in relation to Brahminical orthodoxy, although Hindu Tantrism is itself eclectic and thus there have been certain strands which have become polymerized with Brahminical conventions (Flood 1998: 46). Among these Tantric systems which have become interpolated

with Brahmanism continues Flood, is the Saiva Siddhanta, as is evident in how it developed to ascribe importance to caste delineations. This notwithstanding, as Saiva Siddhanta began to shift away from its origins in Northern India and take root amongst the Tamils of Southern India, it came to be influenced by the devotional theism popularized among Tamils by the Saivite poet-saints the Nāyanmārs (Flood 1996: 168). The Nāyanmārs hailed from a multitude of social backgrounds, resembling the diverse spectrum of the Tamil social order to include both nobility and outcasts, whilst all being equitably venerated as saints due to the proclamation in their message that caste distinctions are ultimately meaningless (Zvelebil 1973: 192). Thus as Saiva Siddhanta transitioned into Southern India, it became infused with a strain of thought which disregards the importance of *varna* adherence, and therefore challenges the fundamental precepts of the Brahminical system. However there appears integral to the heritage of Saiva Siddhanta a contradiction of sorts in how it continues in theory to legitimize both Brahminical Hinduism and Nāyanmār *bhakti*, in how both of these perspectives contain drastically divergent emphases on either the fulfilment of caste duties or the latter's universalist devotionalism.

Presently, however Flood seems to suggest that Saiva Siddhanta's faithfulness to Hindu orthodoxy is in practice more or less a ceremonial acknowledgement, and that the non-orthodox elements of Saiva Siddhanta are instead observed principally (Flood 1996: 170). Considering the aforementioned, it is therefore unsurprising that Sri Lankan Hindus did not according to participant responses justify their support of the LTTE on the basis of *varnāśramadharma*. Instead the suggestion here is that the typical participant response, reflecting the predominance of Saiva Siddhanta among Sri Lankan Hindus, would instead be a reflection of Saiva Siddhanta ethical

discourse. However Nallasvami, a prolific modern exponent of Tamil Saiva Siddhanta claims that the tradition can be noted for its epigrammatic coverage of ethical matters, yet whilst also proclaiming that what does exist in this regard extols foremostly the virtue of '*ahimsa*' or non-violence, drawn from the '*Tirukkural'* (Bergunder 2010: 51). The *Tirukkural*, one of the so-called 'Tamil Books of Law', is a poetic text tentatively dated between the first and sixth centuries CE, which has functioned in Tamil culture as a moral guide designed to maintain social order (Hindery 1978: 162). From an analysis of the *Tirukkural*, one may arrive at a conclusion in support of Nallasvami's assertion that the doctrine of *ahimsa* is pre-eminently exalted, according to for example verses 203 and 207. Gier, when commenting on the text, states that it demands 'absolute noninjury' and that it 'declares forgiveness is a higher virtue than retaliation, and that forgetting infraction is higher even than forgiveness' (Gier 2004: 35).

The apparent consequence of Saiva Siddhanta's hegemony in Sri Lanka is that it would in theory have prevented numerous Sri Lankan Hindus from pledging their support to the LTTE due to its proscription against violence. A single primary interview response[69] within this research would confirm this, where they stated that their understanding of Hinduism is one that denounces violence, and therefore by extension the LTTE. However participants also identified an interpretation of Hinduism which appears to validate a violent response to the Tamil conflict with the Sri Lankan State, although not in a way which represents any well-established sub-tradition of the religion. Initially it was conjectured that any Hindu justification of military action was likely to originate from a Brahminical reading of the tradition,

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[69] Namely, Participant 6.

however it seems that according to this research the rationale for Hindu support of the violent retaliation against the Sri Lankan State was born not of an adherence to Brahmanism, but rather a novel appraisal of Hindu mythological narratives in which the conflict of contemporary Sri Lanka was symbolically represented. In summary, the analogous representation of the Sri Lankan State with the *adharmic* or unrighteous figures within Hindu myth and the violent retaliation of deities and mortal heroes to such antagonists prompted some Hindus to conclude that a similar rejoinder is a warranted, if not even celebrated manoeuvre. Chief among these include the *Ramāyāna* and the *Mahābhārata* epics, though reference to Puranic narratives are evident where the figures of Murugan and Kāli are concerned. As explained in Chapter 4, such sacred mythological narratives ensconced within the *smrti* literature base are steeped in the Brahminical tradition in that they reinforce the ethics of violence according to the concept of *varnāśramadharma*.

Yet with regards to the Sri Lankan Hindus who opted to support the LTTE by virtue of such narratives, no direct mention of *varnāśramadharma* was provided as the underlining justification for such actions. Moreover the interpretation of these sources was one that allowed and encouraged the participation of women in warfare; a notion which is strictly impermissible according to Brahmanism, as women are agents external to the sphere of caste-specific obligations. Accordingly the Brahminical framework is seemingly absent from beliefs of those Sri Lanka Hindu which claimed religious principles as being instrumental in their decision to support the LTTE. Rather it seems that in such cases, these texts were read in a fashion which romanticizes the martial lifestyle and its associated virtues, whilst also perceiving the narrative polarity of righteous and unrighteous as reflected within the Sri Lankan Civil

War, and by proxy the prerogative of the righteous to combat the unrighteous. Evidently this is quite the departure from the conventional systematic expressions of Hinduism, such as Brahmanism or the Saiva Siddhanta, and is perhaps more akin to the various 'popular' or 'folk' renditions of Hinduism which tend to be eclectic in belief insomuch as it can incorporate elements of Brahmanism alongside novel non-orthodox aspects (O'Malley 2011: vii), and in which mythology is a marked focal point of determining belief and practice (Fuller 2004: 308). In terms then of Hinduism which supposedly sanctioned certain Sri Lankan Hindus' involvement with the LTTE, it might appear to have arisen outside of any systematic institution of Hinduism, and instead have its origins with the popular practice of the religion. Perhaps then the most pressing question to arise from observing such an innovative revision of Hinduism was that of agency.

Participants were generally silent as to how this radical method of engaging Hindu ethics via *smrti* narratives emerged; however, a small few implicated the LTTE as its orchestrators and promulgators. In Chapter 4 it has already been acknowledged that LTTE have been recorded as having appropriated 'Hindu mysticism' as a means of furthering recruitment prospects. Although what participants have described here is not an example of mysticism, the possibility of LTTE manipulating Hinduism in additional ways to suit their own ends nevertheless becomes initially validated. Further to this, note how understanding Hindu mythological narratives devoid of their original Brahminical context is consistent with the LTTE aim to rid caste ideology from among Sri Lankan Tamils (Shalk 2010: 108), purportedly for the sake of instilling greater cohesion amongst its mixed-caste fighting force (Thurairajah 2011: 135). Reading the texts in this way then retains a justification of violence when

Hindus are confronted with an oppressive aggressor, though it does so with ubiquitous appeal due to the absence of caste ideology. To retain the Brahminical undercurrent here would otherwise entail that the justification of warfare is limited to one social category – thereby prospectively severely limiting the available recruitment pool – and that sustaining notions of caste hierarchy in this way threatens to prevent a firm unification of Tamils. As such, where participants assign the LTTE as being responsible for engendering and advocating this interpretation of Hinduism, there is seemingly a robust argument in favour of this assertion in that it would benefit their recruitment prospects whilst also supporting their organizational aspirations. The ensuing question though may thus be why this revision of Hinduism would come to be accepted by Sri Lankan Hindus, and perhaps the popular practice of Hinduism could provide the answer.

The *smrti* mythological narratives are widely proliferated on a popular level, as is evident for example within grassroots Tamil theatre performance (Thompson 2005: 66), and so are relatable to Sri Lankan Hindus to an almost universal degree. Furthermore with popular Hinduism in all respects being typically eclectic and fluid (Morris 2006: 123), this relative lack of rigidity may have allowed for such a reinterpretation of well-known sacred narrative. However though Law observes that the LTTE attempted to procure support by appealing to 'Hindu mysticism' (Law 2009: 247), participant responses did not appear to allude to anything of this nature. Thus where there seems scope amongst Sri Lankan Hindus to reject on the prevailing religious principles of Saiva Siddhanta the support of militant Tamil separatism, there has been a divergent form of Hinduism present which appears to lend support to warfare against the Sri Lankan State perhaps on popular level. With regards to those

Sri Lankan Hindus who adhere to the Hinduism of Saiva Siddhanta, becoming involved with inter-religious peace organizations would clearly appear the ethically sanctioned method of conflict resolution, whilst opting for armed resistance seems to violate the non-violent precepts of the tradition. However the justification of violence according to the interpretation of Hindu mythology as identified by participants appears to have resonance among the sub-demographic of Sri Lanka Hindus who practise the popular varieties of Hinduism precisely because of its dynamic nature which lacks fixed ethical discourse. There are then certain Sri Lankan Hindus in the contemporary period which possess an understanding of their religion which authorizes military action in the face of perceived agitation from oppressive sources.

Therefore even if contextual conflict dynamics were reassessed with grassroots emphasis and any coercive pressure from militant Tamil separatists is minimized, it would seem that this form of Hinduism is not like Saiva Siddhanta in appearing fundamentally conducive to non-violent attempts at conflict resolution such as inter-religious peace organizations. In fact it may prove that the essential strength of this peculiar variant of Hinduism may be located at the intersection between religious allegiance and ethnic culture of Sri Lankan Hindus. Participants had highlighted an apparent Tamil cultural admiration of warrior heroics[70], based upon the assertion that the martial lifestyle is one which bestowed a glorified or respected status upon those who embody it, regardless of whether one survives combat or is fatally wounded whilst partaking in it. The allure of prospective martyrdom here is said to ultimately achieve the same end as fighting for the LTTE and surviving the ordeal; namely, that of honour or respect based upon the valuation of those willing to engage in warfare,

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[70] This may possibly be linked to the Tamil construct of masculinity, where it values those whom are physically formidably (Velayutham 2008: 8).

as this supposedly exhibits primarily the virtue of courage. Rosoux claims that for an individual to contemplate martyrdom such requires the sacralisation of a cause – be it either a religious or political one – where the sacrifice of individual existence is perceived as conducive to the implementation of a grander narrative (Fields et al 2004: 150). Yet participant responses seemed to be suggesting that the appeal of martyrdom in support of the LTTE was less about the 'bigger picture' as it were, and rather that the legacy of the individual profited due to their exaltation as embodying a cardinal virtue.

Lewis determines that prospective martyrs of militant movements can in addition to possessing the altruistic motive of self-sacrifice for a 'higher' cause, individuals may also have various egocentric reasons for pursuing martyrdom (Lewis 2012: 181). Though the LTTE did with their public rhetoric undoubtedly attempt to induce prospective martyrs by sanctifying the struggle for Tamil Eelam (Somasundaram 2010: 421), perhaps the reason why many were receptive to this was not because they were necessarily selflessly devoted to the goals of the grander narrative, but instead because they desired the personal veneration that was afforded to LTTE martyrs. An example of the way in which those who died in service of the LTTE were afforded principal admiration was how an official 'LTTE calendar' was constructed to include holidays commemorating the fallen, whilst the internment sites of martyrs were developed into shrines in which regular services and rituals were held to honour those who had participated in the LTTE struggle (Roberts 2005b: 81). Where the general fluidity and mythological character of popular Hinduism allowed for many Sri Lankan Hindus to identify with the notion of emulating the tradition's various warrior-hero figures, perhaps this was also complimented by certain values related to

Tamil ethnicity which provided a lingering cultural veneration of the military persona, thereby granting the prospect of war with further appeal. Furthermore this would have seemingly been galvanized by the enviable rewards of potential martyrdom, should any aspirations of partaking in war prove fatal. In effect then Sri Lankan Hindu identity appears to harbour a dichotomy between the celebration and abjuration of war, at least as far as the values of Saiva Siddhanta and Tamil culture are concerned.

However popular Hinduism is on an ethical level not universally dedicated to the principle of *ahimsa*, for it appears generally ambivalent regarding the legitimacy of violence (Parekh 1999: 165). Adherents of popular Hinduism in Sri Lanka would thus not necessarily be confounded by such cultural values and the principles of their religion. Yet affiliation to Saiva Siddhanta tends to be constrained to the upper echelons of Sri Lankan Hindu society, with those at the lower end of the social spectrum commonly practising popular variants of Hinduism (Derges 2012: 136). Seemingly then the social elite of the Sri Lankan Hindu community might be better equipped as a result of greater affiliation to Saiva Siddhanta to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations than those positioned towards the lower polarity of social stratification, who in turn may be more easily prompted into militancy due to the lack of a rigid ethic of non-violence counteracting a cultural appreciation of martial conduct. Given that the form of Hinduism identified by participants which appears to have provided support for the LTTE's armed secession appears to resemble popular Hinduism, it would appear that Sri Lankan Hindus of lower social status would have perhaps been less likely to have become involved with inter-religious peace organizations than their neighbours of higher social standing.

Perhaps then this dichotomy between the celebration and detestation of violence amongst Sri Lankan Hindus represents class disparity, and that an individual's position within this social order in turn proved significantly determinative as regards the prospects of a Sri Lankan Hindu working with inter-religious peace organizations or indeed becoming involved in separatist militancy.

7.2. Conclusion

Evidently Tamil separatist ideology and those who have pursued its vision have to an extent impacted upon the prospect of Hindu involvement with inter-religious peace organization within both mid-war and post-war contexts. Though the LTTE did not appear to adopt an active stance in opposing inter-religious peace initiatives, there was still a sense among some Hindus that by cooperating with such organizations they may nevertheless have run the risk of provoking reprisal. This concern appears to have been inferred from the LTTE and inter-religious peace organizations possessing dissonant visions for the future of Sri Lanka. It was noteworthy however that this perceived threat of the LTTE did not necessarily prevent Sri Lankan Hindus, for though 50% of total participants acknowledged a potential hazard of this kind, only 32% of the total admitted that it convinced them to avoid engaging with inter-religious peace organizations. Accordingly the remaining 18% here did nonetheless opt to become active in the work of inter-religious peace organizations, despite recognizing the LTTE to be a prospective danger to those involved. In terms of providing a rationale for this, most just claimed that a desire for peace overruled any concerns for personal safety, with the exception though of a single participant –

Participant 3. Participant 3 believed that by working with specifically the Sarvodaya Movement he would be unlikely to pique the LTTE's resentment, due to the Sarvodaya Movement being publically critical of the Sri Lankan State, who in turn projected a counter-vilification of the Sarvodaya Movement. From Participant 3's perspective, this would offer the Sarvodaya Movement amnesty from any LTTE scorn, although this did not extend to any other inter-religious peace organizations which enjoy a more favourable relationship to the Sri Lankan State.

The contradistinct agendas of the LTTE and inter-religious peace organizations not only seemed to suggest to participants a prospective hostility, but it also offered mutually incompatible options to Sri Lankan Hindus by which they may address inter-ethnic grievances. In a further way then the presence of the LTTE impacted on the prospects of Hindu engagement with inter-religious peace initiatives due to it offering a divergent solution to social contentions affecting them, with 14% of total participants having reported avoiding involvement with inter-religious peace initiatives due to their judgement that the LTTE offered the more promising alternative. Seemingly then the strategy for conflict resolution offered by inter-religious peace organizations was perceived by some Sri Lankan Hindus as invalid and therefore unable to improve their situation. Yet with the defeat of the LTTE ushering in Sri Lanka's current post-war climate, it appears that more participants (64%) agreed that Tamil separatism has since become less influential in post-war Sri Lanka to varying degrees as a consequence, although some also acknowledged other contributing factors such as the migration of loyal separatists to Western nations in order to find sanctuary from the Sri Lankan State. This alleged relegation of Tamil separatism's influence in the post-war period was reflected in the responses

of those participants who previously felt intimidated by the LTTE presence, where they now claim to perceive no such threat from advocates of Tamil separatism, and consequently feel at greater liberty to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations. The 14% of total participants previously identified as resistant to engaging with inter-religious peace organizations due to sympathizing with the LTTE cause all maintain an allegiance to the underlying Tamil separatist ideology of the organization even after its demise, meaning that they sustain this same reluctance to become involved even within the post-war environment.

Finally it is interesting how certain Hindu conceptions of legitimate violence were effective in compelling some adherents to ally themselves to the LTTE campaign, and therefore excluding them from involvement with inter-religious peace organizations. However though this was hypothetically forecasted as being related to the observance of Brahminical interpretations, instead it seems that such was largely inspired by reading sacred mythological narratives in terms of a simple 'good versus evil' dynamic, within which analogies were drawn between the Sri Lankan State and antagonistic villains. With righteous protagonists dispatching these mythic malefactors with the use of military force, it seemed that an armed insurrection against the State was then warranted, leading some Hindus to validate the actions of the LTTE whilst inspiring personal participation in the fighting. In addition, some Hindus also interpreted the exploits of certain deities as documented in myth to sanction the use of violent force against perceived unscrupulous – or just simply non-Hindu – aggressors. However responses from Participants 6, 24 and 25 suggest alternative understandings of Hindu values which rebuke LTTE militancy on the grounds of it appearing unethical. This implied, particularly in the case of Participant

6, that Hindu values did not entirely divert adherents away from pursuing involvement with inter-religious peace organizations, but rather could in fact be conducive to seeking the alternative nonviolent resolutions such as initiatives of this nature. Although not directly connected with Hindu religiosity[71], a number of participants identified a Tamil cultural trend wherein those who are engaged in martial pursuits are adulated, meaning that many Hindus as a by-product of Tamil ethnicity eagerly sought the opportunity to become martyred or victorious in the service of the LTTE – something which obviously was not a possibility whilst working with inter-religious peace organizations.

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[71] Although this may be argued as complimenting the aforementioned understanding of Hinduism which grants a central role to the sacred mythology of warrior paragons.

Chapter 8 – Perceived Contentions between Sri Lankan Religious Communities and their Impact upon Hindu Involvement within Inter-Religious Peace Initiatives

8.1. Introduction

This present chapter constitutes the final segment of field data analysis, which has tested the reality of the various hypothetical considerations concerning the Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in contemporary Sri Lanka. Specifically, this chapter will address if from a Hindu perspective there are any contentions between religious communities which they believe inhibit successful inter-religious engagement. Primarily this will be undertaken with a view to discerning any contentions of this kind which involve Sri Lankan Hindus, in order to reach an understanding of how they may have influenced the prospects of Hindu involvement with inter-religious peace organizations.

8.1.1. Identified Contentions between Sri Lankan Religious Communities

Earlier throughout this thesis I had acknowledged various belligerences that are maintained between contemporary Sri Lankan religious communities, which appeared to present significant impediments for those attempting to orchestrate inter-religious engagement for the sake of conflict resolution. Chief among these was the alienating fundamentalism which permeates the nation's Buddhist community,

though there have also been vociferous allegations of 'unlawful' Christian evangelism which seems equally as destructive to inter-religious relations. Such contentions are themselves identified within academic literature, for the scarcity of sources examining inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka entails that it has so far remained ambiguous regarding the impact of these controversies upon the endeavours of inter-religious peace organizations. Accordingly within the primary body of interviews undertaken with Sri Lankan Hindus, Interview Question Twelve asked of participants if they were aware of any particular contentions between faith communities which have placed strain upon the positive development of inter-religious relations. Since analysing the responses of all twenty-eight participants, there was not a single participant to claim that there have been no contentions of this kind which have hindered inter-religious cooperation. However some participants were more precise or detailed in their response than others[72], as a small number of participants (14%) provided only generalized responses which implied that plethora of problems exist between all religious communities in Sri Lanka. This 14% of participants comprises Participants 3, 4, 9 and 27, and a common concern among this group is how seemingly mutual claims of religious exclusivity have exacerbated inter-religious relations. Specifically, Participants 3, 4 and 27 each disclosed their apprehensions of how competing absolutist truth claims have generated divisions amongst Sri Lankan religious communities.

For example Participant 3 replied 'Yes there are always problems with this because each religion thinks it is the only right one' (P3/2013/CP), whilst Participant 27 commented that 'Religion is just another thing which divides Sri Lankans. We need

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[72] As will be discussed momentarily, this is to suggest that these participants instead identified specific groups and/or specific issues which were problematic in this regard.

to live religions in a way that can accept others, and not try to prove that ours is better than everyone else's' (P27/2013/WP). Whilst agreeing to an extent with Participants 3 and 27, Participant 4 states 'Yes there have been problems between all religions here, because each one thinks he is better than the rest. But this is less so now because to think this way only brings more fighting, and more dying, and too many have gone this way' (P4/2013/CP). Participant 4 then is suggesting that though conflicting absolutist claims between Sri Lankan religious communities have historically proven a critical point of contention, the reality of contemporary inter-communal violence has led adherents of all religions to reassess the potentially devastating consequences of adopting such a divisive outlook. The responses though of Participants 3 and 27 do not appear to suggest any such reassessment in this respect, in how they had simply identified this as problematic. Participant 9 however did not provide a response in concert with the other participants in this sub-grouping. Instead Participant 9 attributed problematic inter-faith relations in Sri Lanka to a mutual lack of forgiveness for perceived past transgressions, answering that 'There are many problems amongst all religions in Sri Lanka. In the past Buddhists have angered Christians, Christians have angered Buddhists, Hindus have angered Muslims and so on. Sadly people do not want to let go of these memories, so they will always be angry' (P9/2013/NCP).

Although there appears to be some discrepancy here among the responses of this 14%, these participants nonetheless each commonly determined alleged contentions between Sri Lankan religious communities as existing between all groups. In other words, these participants allocated responsibility for these hostilities equally to all religious communities as they claimed such problems as having been mutually

perpetrated. However the remaining 86% of total participants provided responses which were not so holistic, as contrastingly these participants alluded to certain belligerences existing between specific religious communities which exclude the mention of others. Indeed most of these participants posited multiple independent dimensions of inter-religious contention in Sri Lanka, with each involving variant relationship dynamics which do not evenly distribute responsibility. The most frequently noted of these problematic belligerences between Sri Lanka religious groups among participant responses is one concerning the Buddhist and Christian communities. 71% of total participant responses, equal to twenty participants[73], reported that a major contention impeding successful inter-religious cooperation may be observed between Sri Lankan Buddhists and Christians. The sole reason offered by participants here as an explanation for this is that of supposed 'unethical' conversion attempts conducted by Christian missionaries targeting local Buddhists. Doubtlessly it was unsurprising for participants to have incorporated this notion at least as part of their answer. Chapter 4 previously articulated that suspected unethical Christian conversion attempts have spawned a controversially radical Buddhist nationalist party, the JHU, on the very pretext of addressing this alleged issue.

8.1.2. Unethical Christian Evangelism and Sri Lankan Hindus

With the JHU then presenting such an official public condemnation of the alleged victimization of Buddhists under Christian missionary activity, it was inevitable that

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[73] Namely Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25 and 28.

participants would have been exposed to this contention, and general participant opinion at 71% is that this is the most significant contention between Sri Lankan religious communities which threatens to inhibit inter-religious engagement. Yet previously in Chapter 4, when discussing claims of unethical Christian conversion in Sri Lanka it was noted within a Sri Lankan news media source that Hindus as well as Buddhists had become the targets of this activity. Accordingly one may have anticipated participants to have identified the same issue as being problematic in terms of Hindu-Christian relationships. However interviews results displayed evidence very much to the contrary, with not a single participant having reported unethical Christian evangelization as a perceived antagonism encountered by the Sri Lankan Hindu community. The initial implications of this data then are either that these supposed unscrupulous Christian proselytization activities conducted in Sri Lanka do not target Hindus, or indeed the possibility that Sri Lankan Buddhists may be exaggerating or perhaps even fabricating such allegations. With regards to the latter, the work of DeVotta as referred to previously evidenced certain Christian evangelical groups as having engaged in exploitative missionary techniques following the 2004 tsunami crisis (DeVotta 2007: 45), and so it is therefore not the case that Buddhist grievances of this nature are entirely fictitious. However DeVotta's research here is unspecific as to which particular religious communities were targeted in this manner, and so it remains unclear whether or not Hindus were approached in this instance.

Yet where the academic research of DeVotta cannot clarify if one ought to conclude that Sri Lankan Hindus have been targeted by these Christian missionary activities, there was a news media source also previously cited which claims to verify that

Hindus alongside Buddhists have been victimized by Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka (Perera 2009). Of course given the nature of this source as discussed within Chapter 4, one cannot simply regard it as being sufficient evidence, especially since my own research would perhaps suggest such alleged furtive proselytizing techniques are not recognized as a concern for Sri Lankan Hindus. During the course of gathering primary interview data whilst in Sri Lanka, it seemed somewhat incongruous that results were beginning to possibly suggest that Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka would have only targeted Buddhists and not Hindus. In fact, I had expected to encounter participant responses which reported such to be a contention for Sri Lankan Hindus in the same vein as it is for contextual Buddhists, given that Hindus were affected by the 2004 tsunami (McGilvray & Lawrence 2013: 111) and so may also have been approached by those Christian aid missionaries responsible for practising subservice evangelism. Accordingly when I came to encounter two particular individuals at separate points during my travels in Sri Lanka, one a Sinhala Christian evangelist and the other a lay Tamil Christian, I conducted secondary unstructured interviews with them so as to corroborate results from primary interview data concerning Hindu-Christian relations. The Sinhala Christian evangelist adhered to an evangelical Baptist Christian denomination, and routinely engaged in mission via the proliferation of Christian literature including the distribution of Biblical texts.

I had encountered this individual whilst exploring the city of Colombo, who approached me on the assumption that as I appeared a Western tourist, I must be interested in viewing local Churches. Upon discovering the actual purpose of my visit to Sri Lanka, this person agreed to being interviewed with regards to their four year

experience and practice of Christian missionary activity. This individual will now be referred to as 'Christian A'. Christian A disclosed that he did not discriminate between who should be the target of his evangelism as 'we want to bring all peoples to Jesus, so it does not matter' (CA/2013/WP), whilst confirming that he has approached Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims on the basis of mission. When asked how individuals tend to react to this evangelism, Christian A responded that 'It depends on the person. Most just keep on walking, but some can get really angry with you' (CA/2013/WP). When asked if individuals of any religious background in particular seemed to react more irate than others when approached by a Christian evangelist, Christian A replied that 'It is hard to say, but probably the Buddhists who dislike us more than the others, especially the monks' (CA/2013/WP). From this then it appears that according to this individual's experiences of conducting Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka, generally Buddhists are ostensibly the least receptive to Christian missionary activity. Although this is of course only the testimony of one individual, it nonetheless would seem cogent given the particularly contentious history between these two traditions as was discussed in Chapter 3.

However with this research primarily concerned with the Sri Lankan Hindu community, I then asked Christian A to describe a typically Hindu response when being approached for the purpose of evangelism. Christian A characterized such as 'Many do not wish to be disturbed, but many also want to listen and join us[74]' (CA/2013/WP). What was beginning to be presented here then was the notion that Hindus respond generally more amenably to Christian attempts of proselytization, and are even perhaps more open to embracing conversion. I then raised the

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[74] Christian A's explanation for why some Buddhists decide to consider the

question of the 'Anti-Conversion Bill' proposed by the JHU, and Christian A's perception of it. Christian A confirmed that they were familiar with the Bill, and that they considered it to be 'persecution, because people like the JHU want Sri Lanka to be Buddhist, like in the ancient days. They hate Christians because more Buddhists are realizing the truth, and are leaving Buddhist teachings for Christian ones' (CA/2013/WP). Evidently Christian A's opinion on the matter suggests that the allegations of unethical Christian evangelism underpinning the Anti-Conversion Bill is inspired by alarm at Buddhists converting to Christianity, although he suggest this is not a matter of coercion, but that some Buddhists are accepting Christianity due to personal epiphany. Christian A was asked if he has been aware of any Hindu support for the Anti-Conversion Bill, to which he replied 'No I have not heard of this, because Hindus are friends of Christians and do not lie like the JHU' (CA/2013/WP). It would appear then that Christian A is arguing that the claims of the JHU pertaining to the assertions of the Anti-Conversion Bill are ultimately fraudulent for being based upon an unyielding desire for a sustained Buddhist hegemony in Sri Lanka.

Christian A appeared also to be suggesting there that an amicable relationship is enjoyed between Sri Lankan Hindus and Christians. Consequently when asked if they would agree that Hindus and Christians presently live together in peace in Sri Lanka, Christian A responded 'Yes, that is true' (CA/2013/WP). I also wanted to ascertain whether Christian A considered this to have been the case during the heightened tension of the Civil War. His response was that 'Yes, the war brought Christians and Hindus closer together because Christians gave care to refugees and injured peoples, and so many were Hindu Tamils' (CA/2013/WP). Christian A appears to be implying that many Hindus felt that they owed Christians a debt of

gratitude for their aid work during the Civil War[75], thereby solidifying the bond between these two communities. When asked if he would consider the Sri Lankan Buddhist and Christian communities as enjoying a comparative peaceful relationship, he retorted 'No, because the Buddhists believe that Sri Lanka is theirs to own. If most people become Christian, then Sri Lanka will no longer be a Buddhist country, so it is mostly a political hatred. Buddhists monks also blame Christians for bringing sin to Sri Lanka, because they say we are slaughtering lots of animals, and we make beer and wine to drink. Recently one monk set fire to himself so that the government would listen to him and ban meat shops and protect animals' (CA/2013/WP). This thesis has previously demonstrated how Buddhist fundamentalism in Sri Lanka is interwoven with nationalist sensibilities which confer the prerogative to rule Sri Lanka upon Buddhists, and so Buddhist objections to Christian evangelism doubtlessly adheres to reason given that it has the potential to diminish Buddhist authority.

However where Buddhist-Christian relations in Sri Lanka are supposedly strained due to ethical disparity in terms of those specified – namely with regards to butchery and alcohol consumption – it instantly appeared irregular that such would not also generally arouse Hindu concerns, given that many of this religious affiliation shun the consumption and production of alcoholic beverages and meat. Christian A was asked why he believed this has not similarly caused grievances between Hindus and Christians, on the basis that many Hindus would also object to the ingestion of these substances. His response was that 'Yes some, but the Hindus tolerate what we do, but yes many have disliked us for eating cows. For this reason the majority of

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[75] The IRPF and their 'Rapid Response Unit' as featured in Chapter 5 would be an example of this, whilst Rohini Mohan's journalisitic account of the Tamil experience during the final phases of the Civil War reports based on eye-witness testimonies about how Sri Lankan Churches functioned as operational bases for relief efforts and refugee support (Mohan 2014: 211).

Christians want peace so they do not eat cows, particularly Tamil Christians, but instead we eat chickens and fish. And even though we are allowed, most Christians do not drink because it can lead to sin and addiction' (CA/2013/WP). According to Christian A then, Hindus unlike some Buddhists it seems do tolerate Christians eating meat insofar as they refrain from consuming beef. Although maintaining a lacto-vegetarian diet is a common and respected practice among Hindus, there are nonetheless those who do consume meat for various reasons, though it is noted that even those who do would consider the slaughter and consumption of cows as morally repugnant due to this particular animal being sanctified as a benefactor of mankind (Doniger 2014: 501). As such it would not be surprising for most Hindus in Sri Lanka to tolerate Christians consuming meat, so long as this does not extend to the inclusion of beef in their diets.

What is perhaps most interesting to note here, is how Christian A claims the Sri Lankan Christian community largely abstains from consuming beef so as to not incite anger amongst Hindus, suggesting that some Christians adopt a perspective that is respectful of Hindu religious beliefs. Interviewing Christian A evidently portrays rather amiable relations between Hindus and Christians, in contrast to a Buddhist-Christian relationship dynamic which is subject to hostilities. Upon travelling through Negombo, I encountered a Tamil Christian who displayed an interest in my research, with whom I conducted a further secondary interview on the subject of Hindu-Christian relations for further corroboration. I will be referring to this individual as 'Christian B' for ease of reference and to preserve anonymity. Christian B was a lay Roman Catholic adherent of Tamil ethnicity, and he was born into a Catholic family which had converted from Hinduism during the Colonial era. I first inquired if

Christian B knew any Hindus, to which he responded 'Yes of course. More Tamils are Hindus than Christians' (CB/ 2013/WP). I then asked if he would consider himself friends with any of the Hindus that he knew, and Christian B replied that 'Yes all them, we are different religions, but same peoples', prompting me to ask for clarification that by 'same peoples' they were referring to them sharing common ethnicity (CB/2013/WP). Christian B then confirmed that was correct. Christian B expressed his general opinions were regarding Hindus and Hinduism, including his belief that 'Hindus are very good people, just like Christians. Both of them love God, and both of them want to be the best people they can be' (CB/2013/WP).

Christian B appeared here to be professing a pluralistic view of religious truth, and so I asked if he therefore considered there to be no incompatibility between Christianity and Hinduism. He replied 'No, both of them lead to salvation. Christianity is the better way, but Hinduism is also good' (CB/2013/WP). Christian B's response suggests that he subscribes to a variant of religious pluralism which accepts that alongside Christianity, adherence to Hinduism may also be counted as a valid expression of religiosity. This perspective contrasts somewhat to that of Christian A, who expressed his intention 'to bring all peoples to Jesus' (CA/2013/WP), suggesting that Hinduism may not be regarded as valid because it is a religion – conventionally at least – devoid of Jesus. Christian A did nevertheless claim that Hindus and Christians coexist peacefully within Sri Lanka, and when asked the same question, Christian B's answer was consistent with this when he stated 'Yes very much so, Hindus and Christians live together, work together and worship together without any argument' (CB/2013/WP). I requested that Christian B elaborate on his disclosure that Hindus and Christians worship together in Sri Lanka. His response was that 'All

the time, Hindus come to churches to leave offerings for the saints at their *murtis*. This is exactly what they do in *kovils* for Hindu gods; they leave flowers and fruits for blessings and protections. Hindus hear of miracles performed by saints and they want to have this also' (CB/2013/WP). I then asked if the reverse may be observed, with Christians attending Hindu places of worship. Christian B replied 'Yes, but not as much. Many go to the *kovils* for big celebrations such as Thaipongal, and some even make special trips with Hindus to Munneswaram or Kataragama for blessings' (CB/2013/WP).

It would appear that Christian B's acceptance of Hinduism is not something which is confined to his individual sensibilities, but is instead shared more widely across his community as he claims that there are Christians and Hindus that are mutually comfortable with attending public worship outside of their own religious centres – a phenomenon similarly observed by Lüthi within the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community in Switzerland (Lüthi 2008: 102). Note also the apparent syncretism in how images of Catholic saints are referred to as '*mūrtis'*, the Hindu term for visual representations of deities in temple iconography. Christian B's depiction of Hindu-Christian relations in Sri Lanka is one where a significant degree of mutual appreciation may be observed to the extent where pluralistic theology and syncretic behaviour become manifest. Moreover, observations within my field research journal notes would further illustrate the intimacy between Hindu and Christian communities in Sri Lanka, as I noticed that businesses purveying Hindu religious paraphernalia – located usually within close proximity to temple complexes – also typically sell icons of Jesus and Christian saints alongside images of Hindu deities. Finally, Christian B was asked if Buddhist-Christian relations were similar generally to Hindu-Christian

ones, and he responded 'Not so much, because a lot of Buddhists do not want Christianity in Sri Lanka because they think it is theirs, so they say we are forcing them to become Christian as well. We are happy for Buddhists to become Christians, but we are never making them do this'.

The common inferences of the interviews taken from both Christian A and Christian B are firstly that the Hindu and Christian communities of Sri Lanka share a generally familiar and agreeable relationship, whereas Buddhists and Christians remain relatively estranged from each other via Buddhist hostility towards Christians. Secondly that in corroboration with participant responses from primary interview data, Christian A and Christian B postulated that allegations of supposed 'unlawful' Christian evangelism have emanated uniquely from Buddhist sources and not remotely from within the Sri Lankan Hindu community. Both Christian A and Christian B each appear to attribute the genesis of these claims to proponents Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist ideology, whereby allegations of this nature have been fabricated as means of preserving the prevailing stature of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community so as to retain its current power hegemony. However to acknowledge DeVotta's research would be to counteract claims that unethical Christian conversion in Sri Lanka is an entirely fictitious allegation (DeVotta 2007: 45). However what may be questioned is the scale of Christian evangelism of this kind, in that though it has been observed to a degree in Sri Lanka by DeVotta in the immediate wake of the 2004 Tsunami Crisis, perhaps it is not as rife as some Buddhists would appear to promote. Initially it would seem appropriate to argue that the claims emanating within the Sri Lankan Buddhist community of unlawful Christian conversion may be to some

extent exaggerated, particular as both Lipton (2002: 10) and Peebles (2006: 178) each describe the 'evangelical' Christian presence in Sri Lanka as being small.

Yet if it was to prove true that Sri Lankan Buddhists are embellishing the scale of these claims, what then would be the rationale for this? One might be tempted here to refer to the legacy of Christian persecution and critique of Buddhism in Sri Lanka during the island's colonial period, speculating that such may have imprinted a trepidation and/or disdain of Christianity resulting in a residual paranoia of Christian evangelism. However such an assertion appears precarious insomuch as it was not singularly Buddhists who suffered mistreatment under Christian absolutism during this period, as Chapter 3 of this thesis illuminates. It is unlikely therefore that historical Christian oppression is responsible for current Buddhist anxiety of Christian mission, as other groups who similarly experienced this persecution do seem to share in this concern. Perhaps then the uniquely Buddhist strident denunciation of unethical Christian proseltyization is related more to an underlying political perspective than a religious one. For some Sinhala Buddhists, Christianity continues to resemble a token of Sri Lanka's colonial past where they were subordinated and in many cases particularly denied opportunities to improve their socio-economic status (Matthews 2007: 456). Christianity then carries certain connotations which depict it in a fashion contrary to the interests of many Buddhists due them also being of Sinhala ethnicity. However in addition to this, one must also appreciate how these connotations have become reinforced as a consequence of how mainstream Christian Churches were perceived as behaving during the Sri Lankan Civil War.

In Perera's news article previously highlighted, it is purported that senior Catholic clergy are accused of abetting the LTTE, whilst other Christian leaders are alleged to have been similarly supportive of the LTTE's agenda (Perera 2009). These claims appear verified in work of Bandarage, where they note how prominent Sri Lankan Christians have expressed criticism of the Sri Lankan Government whilst justifying the LTTE activity as a response to this (Bandarage 2009: 162). In addition to this Kenneth Fernando, former Anglican Bishop of Colombo, recalls how he himself alongside other senior Sri Lankan Christian figures functioned as emissaries between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government due to these individuals having maintained a cordial relationship with either polarity (Fernando 2005: 218). In either case then, representatives of the Sri Lankan Christian community are presented as being either sympathetic or at least tolerant of the LTTE, and hence would be perceived by many Sinhala as empathizing with so-called terrorist insurgents. I would argue that this has sustained the image of Christianity as a force largely hostile to Sinhala interests. As such with the Sinhala being a predominantly Buddhist ethnicity, the seemingly exclusive Buddhist concern of unethical Christian proselytization arose as a by-product of the continuing apprehension of Christianity as an essentially anti-Sinhala institution. The apparent hysteria surrounding this issue though is patently disproportionate to the evidence, as accusations of rampant Christian zealotry are offset by the field data results which strongly allude to Sri Lankan Christians enjoying a forbearing relationship with their Hindu neighbours.

Such allegations then according to the JHU and its supporters present underhanded Christian evangelism as endemic, though these allegations arise from an ostensible political agenda which would be furthered by an exaggeration of this. Furthermore,

given that participant responses from both primary and secondary interviews conclude that Hindus and Christians enjoy a generally amiable relationship with no reports of having been targeted by Christian evangelists in this manner, it is again unlikely that Sri Lankan Christianity is infiltrated to any sizeable degree by extreme evangelical tendencies. If these accusations concerning substantial underhanded Christian proselytizing of Buddhists were true, there would be no cogent reason why Hindus would not also be frequently targeted as their religious identity is as much divergent from Christianity as is Buddhism. In contrast then to the hypothesizing in Chapter 4 that was formulated prior to field research, apprehensions of furtive Christian evangelism appears not to be an impediment for Sri Lanka Hindus with regards to prospectively engaging in inter-religious peace efforts. Furthermore, during the previous chapter it was yet unclear if the Christian background of the IRPF would have negatively affected the decisions of Hindus to participate with this organization, due to the presence of Christian evangelical groups employing an aggressive mission stratagem. However given that such allegations appear to be somewhat sensationalized, and that the Hindu and Christian communities of Sri Lanka appear to be notably familiar, it is also highly unlikely that the IRPF's Christian heritage impacted deleteriously upon the Hindu community's prospective engagement with them.

8.1.3. Buddhist Fundamentalism and Sri Lankan Hindus

Whilst allegations of unethical Christian proselytization has not been shown in this research to be a contention between contextual Hindus and Christians, there does of

course remain the question of Buddhist fundamentalism in Sri Lanka and the stress this may exert upon Hindu-Buddhist relations in light of orchestrating inter-religious peacebuilding. Eighteen of the total twenty-eight participants[76] (64%) included at least as part of their answer to Interview Question Twelve that they note contentions between Buddhists and Hindus. However, it would seem that all responses of this kind where in a certain sense misrepresentative in that every one of these eighteen participants observed a supposed Hindu-Buddhist contention on the basis of ethnic conflict between Tamil and Sinhala. Participant 23 for example stated that 'The main fight is not because of religion, but Buddhists and Hindus do fight because they are Sinhala and Tamils' (P23/2013/NWP), whilst Participant 19 replied that 'Buddhists also dislike Hindus because we are all Tamils and they are Sinhala' (P19/2013/SP). As such participants here were not exactly identifying a contention between religious communities, as much as they were acknowledging one between ethnic communities who happen to also diverge largely in terms of religious adherence. In other words, this supposed Buddhist-Hindu contention is merely an appearance caused by proxy of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. What participants have here identified then would be inappropriately delineated a contention between religious communities, for discord of this kind would more resemble the previous issue featured in this analysis; namely, that of Buddhist-Christian tension regarding the matter of evangelism. Such is purely an instance of religious contention, as opposed to being ethnic in nature, as the ethnicity of adherents of either Christians or Buddhists is irrelevant to the dispute.

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[76] Specifically Participants 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26.

To better illustrate the point, the essence of this contention is that there are evidently Christian groups in Sri Lanka who wish to increase in size due to absolutist truth claims, and there are Buddhists like the JHU who are fundamentalist in character that also insist on a counter-monopoly on truth and thus oppose the activities of the former. Clearly then there is no role ascribed to ethnic identity within this specific contention, only that of religious identity. Yet nonetheless this fundamentalism permeating Sri Lankan Buddhism appeared prior to conducting field research as prospectively problematic for Buddhist-Hindu relations due to the absolutist status it attributes to Buddhist teachings, which are in so many ways opposed to Hindu ones. Though many primary interview participants reported Buddhist fundamentalism as problematic with regards to allegations of unlawful Christian evangelism, participants here did not at all identify any tensions between Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka as a consequence of fundamentalist beliefs. During secondary interviews with Christian A and Christian B, it was proposed that Buddhist-Christian relations were strained by perceived treatment of animals alongside alcohol production and consumption. It is noted that with alcohol remaining somewhat of a taboo substance for many Hindus (Vaillant 1995: 59)[77], it is improbable that such would be similarly a point of contention between Buddhists and Hindus. However with regards to the treatment of animals, it was suggested by Christian A that some Buddhists have been critical of Christian dietary norms which condone the slaughter and consumption of meat. Yet given that a number of Hindus in Sri Lanka sanction and indeed practise '*bali*' or animal sacrifice as I had personally witnessed, would not at least certain Buddhists object to this on similar grounds to their critique of butchery?

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[77] Including within the Saiva Siddhanta sect, which is a prevalent Hindu tradition in Sri Lanka (Flood 2006: 145).

Feddegama observes a contradiction among Sri Lankan Buddhist perspectives in that there is both condemnation of animal sacrifice on Buddhist moral principles, yet there also continues to be active participation within it at a popular level (Feddema 1997: 203). Although somewhat surprisingly there appears to be some support amongst Sri Lankan Buddhists for ritualized animal slaughter, there are conversely nonetheless activists campaigning against the practice on the principle that it violates the animal welfare afforded by Buddhist ethical sensibilities (The Times of India 2013). Gombrich & Obeyesekere argue that this proscriptive viewpoint is one that has been shared by the majority of Sri Lankan Buddhists (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 34), and thus it appears that in fact the condemnation of Hindu sacrificial rites involving animals is present amongst Sri Lankan Buddhists, seemingly to a significant extent. In addition to this though, whilst travelling within Sri Lanka's Southern Province towards the town of Galle, I had encountered a Sinhala Buddhist driver with whom I conducted a secondary unstructured interview due to them having expressed an interesting perspective on Hinduism in Sri Lanka. This particular individual, referred to henceforth as 'Buddhist A', was curious in that I had come to Sri Lanka researching Hinduism, finding it amusing that I had 'come to the wrong country' because I should instead have 'gone to India, where most of them are Hindu peoples' (BA/2013/SP). After reminding him that Sri Lanka is also home to a number of Hindus, Buddhist A continued that 'Yes there are Hindu people here, but it is wrong of them to be Hindu in Sri Lanka' (BA/2013/SP).

My first question to Buddhist A was to follow up why it should be considered 'wrong' to 'be Hindu' in Sri Lanka. Buddhist A responded that 'It is wrong to be Hindu in Sri Lanka because Sri Lanka is a Buddhist place. The Buddha himself make it this way'

(BA/2013/SP). I then asked Buddhist A to specify here if I was correct in understanding that, according to their opinion, only Buddhism should be permitted to be practised in Sri Lanka. Buddhist A confirmed this, reasoning that 'Because only Buddhism is good and right. Hindu peoples do not follow Buddha and so do not do what is good and right'. Requiring further depth, I requested that Buddhist A provide me with an example of Hindu immorality, to which he responded 'The worst thing is that Hindu peoples do not listen to Buddhism. This makes them kill buffalo, goats, chickens, all sorts of creature. This is a wrong thing to do, Buddha said' (BA/2013/SP). From these responses, there are evidently Buddhists who continue to denounce the sporadic Hindu practice of *bali*, who also seemed to display an inclination towards fundamentalist Sri Lankan Buddhism by such characteristic hallmarks as absolutism and support of the '*dhammadīpa*' ideal. It would appear therefore that Buddhist fundamentalism in Sri Lanka could provoke contention between the nation's Buddhist and Hindu communities due to an apparent disregard of Hindu practice on the basis of a perception which both affirms the superiority of Buddhist teachings, as well as legitimizing the *dhammadīpa* myth.

8.1.4. Islam and Inter-Religious Relations

With regards to Buddhist-Hindu relations in Sri Lanka, it appears that some primary interview participants conflated what seems patently ethnic conflict with inter-religious contentions. Likewise where only two participants of the total twenty-eight (7%), Participants 15 and 25, identified supposed contentions between the contextual Hindu and Muslim communities which nonetheless assumed the same

misconception. Participant 15 firstly stated 'Muslim and Hindus sometimes also conflict about war time with the LTTE killing Islamic people' and Participant 25 recounted that 'Muslim peoples have also struggled with Hindus during the war because of the LTTE's crimes'. Evidently then both Participant 15 and Participant 25 are transposing belligerences between ethnic communities upon the religious communities affiliated to either side of the ethnic conflict. These contentions then between Muslims and Hindus are in fact problems between Tamils and Islamicized ethnicities, and any appearance of Hindu-Muslim is purely generated by proxy of these ethnic groups being further polarised by religious affiliation. Another small cluster of the total twenty-eight participants, numbering three (11%), identified a supposed tripartite shared conflict dynamic between Muslims, Buddhist and Hindus. Again though these participants appeared to be alluding to ethnic conflict between Sinhala, Tamil and Islamicized ethnicities, which gives the impression due to concomitant religious disparity of such being a contention between religious communities. According then to the analysis of this theme so far conducted, participants have only disclosed two contentions between Sri Lankan religious communities they perceive as being problematic with regards to coordinating successful inter-religious peace efforts. Both a number of primary interview participants and two secondary interview participants[78] identified pertinent Buddhist-Christian contentions, whilst a further secondary participant[79] suggested the existence of a challenging Buddhist-Hindu contention.

The only response of the twenty-eight primary interview participants yet to be examined is one which was provided at least as part of the answer of 46% of total

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[78] Christian A & Christian B.
[79] Buddhist A.

participants. These thirteen participants[80] reported to apprehend contentions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities of Sri Lanka. Near identical to the contentions claimed to exist between Buddhists and Christians, four participants here[81] acknowledged a conflict between Muslims and Christians based upon conflicting absolutist truth claims and religious values. Participant 11 for example summates in their response these analogous hostilities within both Buddhist-Muslim and Buddhist-Christian relations where they stated that 'Buddhists begin most of the fighting between religions because they don't like the Christians and the Muslims as they are meat eaters and want converts to their religions'. Participant 19 also recognizes the Buddhist anxiety towards religious conversion towards other faiths, where they answered 'The Buddhists dislike the Christians and Muslims because they are scared Buddhists will become Christians and Muslims', as does Participant 17 where they commented that 'Some Buddhists cause many problems with Christians and Muslims - they do not like any of them because they are not Buddhist, and they think these religions want to stop other people being Buddhists'. Just as was the case with Christianity's affirmation of evangelism, the general Muslim propensity towards seeking converts appears to have received in Sri Lanka bitter criticism from some within the Buddhist community. Such is founded upon similar considerations underlying the Buddhist remonstration of Christian evangelism, whereby it is perceived as a threat to the current Buddhist power hegemony in Sri Lanka.

I had stated previously during this section that the Christian missionary ideal seems rather blasé in contemporary Sri Lanka, with numerous posters, leaflets and 'bumper

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[80] Namely Participants 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25 and 26.
[81] Participants 11, 17, 19 and 24.

stickers' either promoting the legitimacy of Christian faith or indeed inviting the public to attend a given church. Regarding the latter of these, it is not uncommon in urban areas to encounter billboards which advertise church services providing a promise that they are open for all to attend. However in extreme contrast to this, there is scarce visual evidence that the Sri Lankan Muslim community places any significant emphasis upon procuring converts. Not a single mosque I had observed during my travels in Sri Lanka appeared to explicitly advertise any possibility of open attendance as did more or less every church encountered regardless of denomination. Accordingly it began to seem incongruous that, as participants were beginning to claim, Buddhists would conflict with Muslims over concerns of proselytization[82]. Moreover, Buddhist bookshops are a common sight in most areas of Sri Lanka, and the stock of which often includes publications which seek to instruct Buddhists in a 'defence' against Christian missionaries. A commonly inventoried publication of this kind was '*Beyond Belief*' by A L De Silva (2003), which contains a concise critical appraisal of Christian theology and practice, all the while proving an overt Buddhist apologetic by highlighting the supposed comparative strength of Buddhist doctrine. However, I did not discover equivalent literature addressing Islamic *da'wah.* Yet whilst visiting a Muslim-owned business in Colombo, I was approached by a member of staff who would enquire if I adhered to Christianity. It then transpired that this individual, who henceforth shall be referred to as 'Muslim A', was attempting to engage me in a form of missionary dialogue.

I then conducted with him a secondary unstructured interview for corroboration, as there seemed a discrepancy between primary interview participant responses

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[82] Particularly since the only scholarly discussion of *da'wah* in Sri Lanka considers only efforts directed internally within the Sri Lankan Muslim community in order to increase piety (Haniffa 2013: 176)

alluding to controversial Islamic proselytization and the apparent lack of this in public view. Describing his evangelical activity, Muslim A stated that 'Muslims in Sri Lanka do want other people to join Islam, whether you are Buddhist, Christian or Hindu. We will talk to you because it is our duty to tell you about Islam and how it is perfected. Most people do not realize the flaws in their own religion, so we have to show them this first before showing that Islam does not have these' (MA/2013/WP). Muslim A agreed that Islamic proselytization attempts were approached far more subtly in being much less public than their Christian counterparts, though he suggested that 'the Christians suffer for this. Buddhist people do not like to see this because it makes them think you are dangerous, so instead we try only to make friends with Buddhists and other religions through business, and then bring them to Islam this way' (MA/2013/WP). I then asked Muslim A to clarify if he was suggesting that only Buddhists become aggrieved by visible frank evangelism, and in response they said 'Yes, that is why Islam only grows slow here because most people in Sri Lanka are Buddhists. We do not get much converts from them, most are Christian Tamil people who come to Islam because we speak the same language' (MA/2013/WP). Regarding how many Hindu Tamils had converted to Islam, Muslim A stated that 'Not many Hindu Tamils want to become Muslim because they are happy with how they are, but the Christian Tamils see that Christianity has many problems which Islam can solve' (MA/2013/WP).

Where primary interview participants identified Buddhism belligerences towards Muslims based upon Islamic missionary activity, any initial doubts pertaining to a lack of visible substantiation were later undermined by this secondary interview data recorded, which confirmed that Muslim proselytization is indeed present in Sri Lanka,

though is conducted through cautious subtlety. The interview undertaken with Muslim A also alludes to the hostilities between some Sri Lankan Buddhists towards Muslims due to Islamic proselytization, in that Muslims have to pursue evangelical activity in an almost covert manner due to fears of a backlash from the Buddhist community. In addition to this conversion apprehension, four participants within this sub-group of thirteen[83] professed their opinion that further Buddhist-Muslim contentions have arisen as a result of the Islamic diet. These participants – specifically, Participants 6, 8, 11 and 25 – provided statements such as 'Buddhists also dislike the Muslims because they are eating more meat without caring for animals' in the case of Participant 25 (P25/2013/NWP), or in the words of Participant 6 'A lot of Buddhists also dislike the Muslims because they disagree with their religion, like where they are eating too much meat' (P6/2013/WP). This would appear a familiar dispute involving Sri Lankan Buddhists, as earlier analysis demonstrated how a somewhat liberal consumption of meat is problematic regarding also Buddhist-Christian relations. Whilst researching in the field, I had learned from conversing with locals[84] in Kandy the extreme lengths to which certain Buddhists were prepared to traverse in order to vocalize their protest against animal slaughter.

On May 24th 2013, a Buddhist monk opted to self-immolate as an act of remonstration against, so claims the Daily Mail, the slaughter of specifically cattle (Bond 2013). Though I arrived in Sri Lanka during the July following the incident, local conversation was very much still concerned with discussing this traumatic event and the issues it had raised. However, though it appears to be unstated in any media coverage, the local opinion was that though this Buddhist monk was protesting

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[83] I.e. those 46% of participants previously identified as having posited Buddhist-Muslim contentions.
[84] Who themselves identified as Buddhist.

against meat consumption generally – although he was particularly outraged by the slaughter of cattle – it was a message intended to be sent with particular salience to Muslims who appear to be anathemized in Sri Lanka as the main culprits for unbridled animal slaughter which preserves no taboo against the killing of cattle[85]. I first became aware of this incident, which occurred outside of the famous Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, after it was retold to me by a Sinhala Buddhist driver in Colombo. This individual, hereafter referred to as 'Buddhist B', then began to express disparaging comments against Muslims during our conversation. Conducting a brief unstructured interview with him concerning the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka, I asked of his view on this recent self-immolation, to which he responded 'It is very sad that this monk has done this, but it has to wake the people up. Muslim people do not respect living things, which means people need to stop it spreading all throughout the world' (BB/2013/WP). When asked if he shared the sentiments of this Buddhist monk, he stated 'Yes but I do eat meat, but I do not eat the cows. This monk was part of big Buddhist group that wants all people to stop eating meat, but if this is not possible, at least we should stop killing the cows. My mother raised me to not eat any meat, so maybe one day I should do this *laughs*' (BB/2013/WP).

In terms of his general perception of Islam and Muslims, Buddhist B divulged that 'Islam is not a good religion. Today you will notice that not all Muslim people are terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslim people. Islamic teachings say that other people need to be killed, you know this because you are from England where you have

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[85] Note that this particular association between Muslims and cattle slaughter in Sri Lanka could have perhaps arisen as a result of many beef suppliers being members of the resident Muslims community (The Sunday Times 2009).

same problems with Muslim terrorists. You are in danger because you are not a Muslim person' (BB/2013/WP). Finally Buddhist B was asked about his own interaction with Muslims, and whether he was on amicable terms with any Muslims. He responded 'No I do not want to know Muslim people. If I see them ever on a train or bus, I do not sit with them. Whenever I hear the prayer call, I just think "fuck off, fuck off back to Arab country" because why should we be disturbed by this when we are Buddhists? Sri Lanka is not a Muslim country, and we do not want it here' (BB/2013/WP). Buddhist B, whilst corroborating other participant responses that Islamic dietary regulations can provoke hostilities from certain Buddhists, also exhibited here a textbook modern 'Islamophobia' familiar to Western environs, which equates Islamic religious principles with an extreme intolerance of non-Muslims to the extent that acts of terror may ensue against those outside of the Muslim community (Cesari 2013: 17). Of the thirteen primary interview participants which identified contentions between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka, three provided the rationale that such may be additionally based upon Buddhist mischaracterization of Muslims as advocates of violence against non-Muslims.

Participants 8, 23 and 26 each commented that certain Buddhists can be hostile towards Muslims due to the belief that Islam instigates terrorism against non-Muslims. Participant 23 for example stated that 'Buddhists now also talk against Muslims, saying that they are another threat to Sri Lanka because of *jihad*', whilst Participant 26 claimed 'Buddhists now mostly fear the Muslims because of all the Muslim terrorists around the world. They are scared that they will start bombing in Sri Lanka, but we have never had this before'. Within Chapter 3 of this thesis, it was established that from its inception Sinhala ethnonationalism had portrayed Muslims

as subversive to the interests of Sri Lankan society. With the modern emergence of various Islamist 'terror' movements and the availability of globally attuned media coverage, such would no doubt complement existing anti-Muslim sentiments among Sri Lankan Buddhists – who are predominantly Sinhala – by enhancing the existing villainous image of Muslims. Finally, it should be noted that Participants 5, 12, 13 and 15 which form the remainder of the thirteen participants which claimed contentions within Buddhist-Muslim relations, did not provide any specific reasons underlining such conflicts. Instead these participants all stated that though they were aware of Buddhist-Muslim contentions, they were not knowledgeable of the details. However each participant here did nonetheless allude to understanding that whatever the cause of such hostilities was, it could be attributed to the fault of Buddhists. In other words, participants conferred responsibility onto Buddhists for provoking contentions between Buddhists and Muslim, despite claiming not being sure of the exact mechanics of the situation.

8.2. The Impact of Inter-Religious Contentions upon the Prospects of Hindu Involvement in Inter-Religious Peace Efforts

The above analysis concluded that, according to primary interview participants at least, the contentions present amongst religious communities in contemporary Sri Lanka do not appear to involve the contextual Hindu community. Accordingly one would therefore not expect these contentions to have a deleterious effect upon the prospects of Hindu involvement within inter-religious peace initiatives as unlike Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, participants here professed to not have

noteworthy challenges to surmount related to interaction with other religious groups. Interview Questions Thirteen to Fifteen inquired of participants if they are currently, or indeed have been in the past, hesitant to engage with inter-religious peace initiatives due to the prospective presence of each of their compatriot religious communities in turn. Ultimately only 82% of total participants provided responses to these questions, due to five participants declining to answer on the grounds that they have always rejected the opportunity to engage with inter-religious peace initiatives in principle, regardless of what other religions would be present. Of the 82% of total participants which did offer responses to these questions, it was collectively unanimous that not a single one claimed to have been at any point hesitant to become involved with inter-religious peace efforts due to the potential presence of any other given religious community. Of course such was somewhat of an anticipated response, given that participants had previously stated in reply to Interview Question Twelve that contentions between faith communities in Sri Lanka involve only the contextual Buddhist, Christians and Muslims. However where Interview Question Fifteen asked of participants if the possibility of encountering Buddhists during any proposed involvement with inter-religious peace initiatives has been a discouraging factor, several participants contributed interesting comments alongside denying that this had been the case.

Seven participants[86] out of the 86% who had provided an answer to Interview Question Fifteen exhibited a certain cynicism regarding the prospects of Buddhist involvement with inter-religious peace initiatives in the first case. Participant 1's response for example, which is a typical representation of participant answers of this

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[86] Specifically Participants 1, 5, 6, 11, 13, 17 and 23.

nature, was that though they have remained unfazed by a prospective Buddhist presence among inter-religious peace efforts, they nonetheless appeared convinced that they 'don't think a lot of Buddhists would have come to this, because the Buddhists here are not always wanting to make friends with other religions' (P1/2013/WP). Such appears ostensibly related to the common perception among participants that contentions between religious communities in Sri Lanka arose from Buddhist belligerences, and so naturally these hostilities entail that these Buddhists who advocate them would reject involvement in inter-religious peace efforts. Clearly though according to these seven participants, it is the majority of Buddhists who are believed to be advocating these belligerences, as demonstrated by how they appear to not expect many Buddhists to have become involved with inter-religious peace initiatives. A further two participants of the aforementioned 86% replied to Interview Question Fifteen that a prospective encounter with Buddhists whilst becoming involved with inter-religious peace efforts would in fact be a particularly welcomed situation. Both Participants 7 and 24 justified this assertion by arguing that as the Sri Lankan Buddhist community is predominately composed of Sinhala, it would thus be considered highly important for them to cooperate within inter-religious peace efforts as this particular ethnic group rests at the very core of conflict in Sri Lanka (P7/2013/WP & P24/2013/NWP).

8.3. Conclusion

In totality then the twenty-eight primary interview participants acknowledged a number of issues between religious communities that they perceived to be

problematic for successful inter-religious engagement. Such contentions were argued to be observable between Buddhist-Christian and also Buddhist-Muslim relations. Secondary interviews appeared to in addition corroborate primary participant claims, whilst also introducing further possible inter-religious contentions not identified by primary interview participants; namely those between Buddhists and Hindus. However given that not one primary interview participant commented upon this, it appears thus unlikely that these alleged contestations are frequently manifest or widespread, thereby consequently implying that such would have little bearing upon inter-religious engagement. A relevant distinction here between the Abrahamic and Hindu communities of Sri Lanka appears to be the intention to acquire converts. Hinduism is observed the world over as a religion which in the overwhelming majority of cases does not seek to proselytize (Sharma 2011: 130). In fact where Hindu 'conversions' do seem to be encouraged are typically only where former Hindus now practising alternative religions are urged to reconsider a return to Hindu practice (Mayer 2008: 47). With the imperative to proselytize largely absent from Hinduism then, this could afford it significant protection from the disparagement of Buddhist fundamentalism as in this regard Hinduism represents little danger to usurping the mythologically mandated Buddhist hegemony in Sri Lanka. Additionally, it would seem that further distinction between Hinduism and the Abrahamic tradition is here notable with regards to ethical norms.

In terms of its appraisal of alcohol consumption and animal slaughter, it would seem that generally Hinduism deviates less from Buddhist conventions than do Christianity and Islam. I would argue this firstly on vegetarianism being a common ideal among Hindus, and in context such is even mandated by the influential Saiva Siddhanta

tradition, whilst alcohol is considered a defiling substance amongst Hindus to all but a diminutive fringe of 'left-hand' Tantric practitioners (Feuerstein 1998: 9). Similarly to how Hinduism's lack of missionary activity may bestow upon it a certain extent of liberty from the censure of Buddhist fundamentalism, perhaps also the relative similarity in basic ethical ideals grants Sri Lankan Hindus additional security from being widely disparaged by fundamentalists within the Buddhist community. However it should also be acknowledged here that some Sri Lankan Hindu practices have previously become targeted by Buddhist activism where they included the ritualistic slaughter of animals, such as at the Munneswaram temple complex where livestock have been sacrificed to the goddess Kāli, provoking an imposed ban in 1980 (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 140). Interestingly though this was not considered an exclusively Hindu practice, for though it was conducted by Hindu temple officiants, the majority of patrons partaking in the ritual were Sinhala Buddhists (Bastin 2002: 67). As this particular instance of animal sacrifice was seemingly more popular among Buddhists than Hindus, it is doubtful that this would have characterized Hindus as generally supportive of animal slaughter, especially since the prevailing Saiva Siddhanta tradition stipulates the practice of *ahimsa* which of course encompasses animal life.

Evidently in retrospect, primary interview participants have provided responses which really depict Sri Lanka's Buddhist community as being the religious group which is accountable for all inter-religious contentions noted. Initially there may be scepticism regarding the tendency among participants to allocate fault in all cases to Buddhists, due to the Sri Lankan Buddhist community being largely comprised of Sinhala individuals and that by virtue of their difficulties with the Sinhala, these self-

identified Tamil Hindus were seeking to disrepute Buddhism as much as possible. However data from secondary interview sources external to the contextual Tamil community which corroborates participant responses would appear to offset any speculative bias based upon ethnic grievances. My only personal scepticism with regards to primary interview responses was regarding Hindu-Muslim relations in light of what was said relating to Buddhist-Muslim relations regarding the slaughter of cows for food. No participant claimed to have noted issues between Hindus and Muslims rooted in dietary disparity, though some did outline such to be challenging to agreeable Buddhist-Muslim relations. Of course it would seem incongruous for Buddhists to be so riled by the slaughter of cows whilst Hindus seemingly remained tolerant of this. It was even noted during secondary interviews with Christian individuals that such is considered offensive by Sri Lankan Hindus, for it ensured that supposedly most Christians therefore avoid the consumption of beef.

Perhaps then there is the possibility that participants did not respond here entirely accurately, for it may have transpired that they had wished to present the Sri Lankan Hindu community as gregariously as possible, and so could have risked portraying them instead as aggressors by admitting to a criticism of Islamic religious practice. In the context of this particular research and question, to admit such could in theory have represented the Sri Lankan Hindu community as contributing to inter-religious discord and thus complicating peace efforts, which again would have constituted as depicting their own community negatively. Conversely however it is still nonetheless entirely possible that Sri Lankan Hindus are tolerant of Islamic dietary norms, and so there is genuinely no contention between Hindus and Muslims on this basis. Yet it would not be prudent to discount entirely the possibility that primary interview

participants may have omitted such from their responses, given that there would be significant potential for Hindus to clash with Muslims regarding this issues, as well as participants having prospective motive to conceal their true perspective out of community loyalty. Consequently provisional reservations may thus be extended to participant responses concerning any hesitance to work alongside Muslims within inter-religious peace organizations.

Chapter 9: Final Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to explore the specifically lay Hindu relationship to inter-religious peacebuilding in the context of contemporary Sri Lanka by examining the extent to which certain presupposed impediments had actually affected this interaction. Such were initially listed during the opening introductory chapter, and were comprehensively elaborated over the course of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Of these hypothesized challenges, this research has come to demonstrate that whilst some may seem not have had any bearing upon this relationship, there were nonetheless a number of them which original data samples appear to confirm as being influential in this regard. Within Chapter 3 of this thesis, there was made a distinction between the types of conflict which could be observed within either of the two periods of the contemporary timeframe according to its definition here maintained. 'Contemporary Sri Lanka' has been understood so far as this research is concerned as constituting a chronological window spanning July 1983 until the present day[87]. Such has been described though as having being bifurcated so as to incorporate two distinct time periods; namely that of 'mid-war', referring to the time elapsing from July 1983 until May 2009, and 'post-war', which includes that which has transpired since May 2009. This division is a useful one, precisely in that it corresponds to the different forms of conflict which have developed in contemporary Sri Lanka. The content of Chapter 3 articulated the existence of both 'ethnonationalist conflict' and 'ethnic conflict' as the taxonomies of conflict in Sri Lanka, which have been variably observable depending on the time period under consideration.

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[87] Which at the time of writing is June 2014.

Whilst ethnic conflict has remained present throughout both mid-war and post-war periods, ethnonationalist conflict was the defining characteristic of the mid-war period, and whose absence marks the onset of the post-war period. The categories of ethnonationalist conflict and ethnic conflict are not entirely exclusive; rather it is patent that the former was begotten of the latter, as the LTTE secessionist campaign against the Sri Lankan State arose from the antecedent Sinhala-Tamil antagonism ensconced within modern Sri Lankan society. However when considering prospectively engaging Hindu citizens in the work of inter-religious peace initiatives within this context, this distinction warrants further import as it appears to have been critically influential in determining the prospects of Hindu involvement. Accordingly what follows in this final chapter is a systematic address of each hypothesised impediment to the Sri Lankan Hindus becoming engaged in inter-religious peace initiatives, with a view to providing a summary overview of how tangible each proved to be in light of the field data results, whilst taking into account the mid- and post-war delineation of time periods where necessary. In doing such, this thesis will have documented concisely how it successfully achieved its primary aim of developing a detailed investigation of the Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives beyond what is accounted for in existing academic literature; namely, the occasional brief gloss over the fact of their involvement. Finally, this thesis will reach its culmination with a succinct commentary on what the implications of these confirmed hypothesized challenges are with regards to the potential success of inter-religious peace initiatives, and thereby accomplishing a secondary utility in providing a reference point for those undertaking a role in orchestrating them.

It is however, briefly worth reconsidering beforehand the constraints of this thesis as were outlined in Chapter 2. There is no need to recount each in detail again here, although it is imperative to once more be reminded of these so as to view the fruit of this research in light of them. Firstly, as all participant responses were offered in participants' second language, there remains the possibility their replies were not as detailed or even as accurate as they might have been should the interviews have been conducted using participants' native language. Secondly, although the title of this thesis may initially suggest otherwise, the responses of Sri Lankan Hindus in relation to inter-religious peace initiatives are not entirely representative of the community, principally in terms of gender. Perhaps though the most important limitation to keep in mind here is the one discussed in Section 2.3.1 of this thesis; namely the 'limitations of study purview', which is defined by its focus on four particular inter-religious peace initiatives and its assessment of this relationship only in terms of the four specific hypothesized impediments referenced above. Chapter 2, as well as raising each of these limitations, also defended how this research project was still viable in spite of them, whilst this present chapter will reaffirm this by summarizing concisely the pertinent findings which have since emerged. However, in view of these limitations, this thesis may also be considered the catalyst for further avenues of research which might, for example, allow insight into the relationship between Sri Lankan Hindu women and inter-religious peace initiatives, or follow a similar inquiry into the community's engagement with more localized forms of inter-religious peacebuilding.

9.1. Hypothesized Impediment 1: The Proximity of the LTTE and Tamil Separatist Ideology

The Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives has clearly not been without complication, particularly during the mid-war period, as their engagement with inter-religious peace organizations has been to an extent limited by the presence of Tamil separatist militancy. It was thus hypothesized during Chapter 4 that militant Tamil separatists, such as the LTTE, and the political ideology they represent could have exerted influence over Sri Lankan Hindus due to their ethnic affiliation, in terms of inspiring armed secession over non-violent responses to the socio-political discontentment of Sri Lankan Tamils. Moreover, it was proposed that any Sri Lankan Hindus who would otherwise opt to become involved in the activities of inter-religious peace initiatives, could be incentivized to refrain from doing so due to threats of reprisal from militant Tamil separatist groups. This research has confirmed the reality of each in individual cases, though with the transition to the post-war period however, this movement exerts far less influence over the Sri Lankan Hindu community than it previously had, suggesting that the post-war period may be able to offer an enhancement of the Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives. To illustrate, consider how during the mid-war period the LTTE had attained peak vigour as the *de facto* authority for approximately 44% of the landmass in Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces (Orjuela 2009: 259), whereas post-war it has been seemingly reduced according to participants to a diminutive landless fringe due to the large-scale death and migration of its supporting body. However whilst the LTTE presence in Sri Lanka has become greatly

diminished since the termination of open warfare, such is not to suggest that it is altogether absent from this context.

This research has evidenced continued sympathies for the ideals of the LTTE even after its vital collapse, and as such it would be erroneous to conclude that the Sri Lankan Hindu community is entirely free from the pressures of Tamil separatist militancy. If participant testimonies are to be believed, these alleged remaining enclaves of Tamil separatist advocacy in Sri Lanka retain a two-fold potential for influencing the Hindu relationship with inter-religious peace initiatives. First in this regard is that if these Tamil separatists collude and conduct themselves as the LTTE had, by extorting civilians and businesses in order to finance militant activities whilst threatening non-compliance with either the destruction of property or violence against defiant individuals and their loved ones (Gunaratna 2003: 212), then this may discourage Hindus local to their area of operation or habitation from participating in the work of inter-religious peace organizations. Secondly, these Tamil separatists are espousing a course of political action which is not only aimed at achieving divergent ends to those sought by inter-religious peace organizations, but is also critical of their capability for securing Sri Lankan Tamil rights. The further challenge then that the apparent remnants of Tamil separatist advocacy presents for inter-religious peace organizations insomuch as their recruitment of Hindus is concerned, is that they are espousing a contrasting programme for Sri Lankan Tamil stability. Now though this voice may seem to be a minority in the post-war period, one should not consequently be misled into overlooking its prospective influence. The opinion of a sizeable cluster of interview participants was that the Sri Lankan Government has been the primary catalyst for the conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka,

and that inter-religious peace organizations have not been significantly efficacious in terms of resolving this conflict precisely because they could not placate the Governmental authorities.

9.2. Hypothesized Impediment 2: Hindu Ethics of Violence and War

Chapter 4 of this thesis had articulated how Hinduism contains somewhat of a juxtaposition in terms of its attitude towards violence and war, containing ethical frameworks which may either justify the pursuit of armed conflict if certain circumstantial details are met, or indeed even reject harm altogether, allowing only non-violent responses to conflict situations. The obvious implications of this are that the nature of a Hindu's ethical standpoint would be a significant influence upon their potential for engagement with inter-religious peace building. Due to its traditional scope of influence, this thesis appropriated solely the former of the aforementioned ethical currents within Hinduism in order to hypothesize Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives. If this 'orthodox' Brahminical model of Hindu ethics was authoritatively observed in Sri Lanka, there appeared a hypothetical challenge to Sri Lankan Hindus becoming inclined toward involvement with inter-religious peace initiatives, as Chapter 4 determined that a violent response to the ongoing ethnic conflict could be validated according to this framework. With the groups like the LTTE having been pursuing this, it seemed a possibility then that the ethical sensibilities of Sri Lankan Hindus could inspire them to instead ally themselves with such groups as opposed to inter-religious peace initiatives. Firstly though one ought to be reminded at this point of Appleby's thesis underlining '*Ambivalence of the Sacred*', whereby it claims that a given religion may be construed to be either

preventative or conducive towards violence (Appleby 2000: 27). The field data amassed within this thesis demonstrates the continued relevance of Appleby's work[88] in that it exposed Hinduism in Sri Lanka as containing variant interpretations of religious ethics which appear to have been either in opposition to violence of the LTTE or indeed commending it.

Such is even despite Appleby's thesis an unsurprising discovery, given Hinduism itself being a notoriously divisive term; so much so, for example, that a publication has been produced as an arena to air the debate between the 'essentialist' and 'deconstructionist' camps (Llewellyn 2005). Regardless of orientation between these positions, scholars from either side agree that what is traditionally referred to under the term 'Hinduism' is a diverse multitude of religiosities, and hence the very basis for the aforementioned debate. Therefore to assess a Hindu community's approach to any phenomenon necessitates an appreciation of this intricacy, and so one would not immediately expect such a relationship to be at all one-dimensional. Specifically though in terms of the ethnic conflict of contemporary Sri Lanka, it would seem that according to this research there were three ethical trends among Sri Lankan Hindus, and contrary to expectations, the orthodox model of Hindu ethics was not preeminent among them. Present firstly among them is the Tantric Saiva Siddhanta tradition, with ethical sensibilities that pronounce the avoidance of harm thus providing the rationale for a rejection of militant Tamil separatism. However coexisting alongside Saiva Siddhanta within the Sri Lankan Hindu community has been a divergent popular understanding of Hinduism which approved violent means as a just

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[88] And as such definitively challenges those advocates of inter-religious peacebuilding who do appear to present too optimistic a view of religion's capacity for conflict resolution, including Francis Cardinal Arinze where he states 'the religions of the world agree on this, that all extol peace. I have not met people of any religion who say that they are not in favour of peace' (Arinze 2002: 10).

approach to addressing contextual social contention, which analogously reflected the Civil War through the lens of mythology to give credence to the LTTE campaign against the Sri Lanka State. Finally there are also a small number of participants who uniquely defend armed resistance against injustice whilst also condemning the LTTE for their unethical killing of civilians. Such is reminiscent of the classical Brahminical stipulations governing warfare (Balkaran & Dorn 2012: 682), and is clearly distinct from Saiva Siddhanta and the aforementioned Hinduism that contrasts with it.

Perhaps then orthodox norms are still observed by some Sri Lankan Hindus, as this form of 'just-war' consideration appears central to Kshatriya discipline according to the *Arthashāstra*, being a legislative manual addressing the righteous performance of conflict derived from Brahminical teaching (Menski 1996: 46). Yet with the LTTE transgressing these stipulations, individuals such as the two aforementioned would not be able to sympathize with the organization; however this would at least in theory not prevent them from identifying with other potential future militant Tamil separatist movements which do not commit such acts in the process. Whilst there may be a polarity of those who would outright disavow the LTTE on ethical grounds and those who would venerate them, there are also those who nonetheless possess scope to condone Tamil separatist militancy, though not in the fashion it was practised by the LTTE. In terms though of how such colours Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives in Sri Lanka, the preponderance of Saiva Siddhanta in Sri Lanka suggests that there has been, and there continues to be, significant potential for Sri Lankan Hindus to become involved with inter-religious peace organizations and strive non-violently towards conflict resolution. However as long as the social conditions of Sri Lanka are such that they appear to be antagonistic to its Tamil populace, there does

nonetheless remain a threat of resurgent separatist militancy insomuch as there are Tamil Hindus who subscribe to interpretations of Hinduism which legitimize armed retaliation as a justified response to these sustained conditions. Yet any Hindus which could justify the use of violence does not necessarily preclude them from taking part in non-violent action, although one has to consider how various cultural elements related to Tamil ethnicity, such as the apparent romanticization of martial glory and self-sacrifice, seem to have lent greater allure to the LTTE campaign.

9.3. Hypothesized Impediment 3: Inter-Religious Contentions

In terms of Sri Lankan Hindus to become involved with inter-religious peace initiatives, there appeared no intrinsic barriers as far as the elementary concept of inter-religious cooperation was concerned. The related hypothesis identified here in Chapter 4 purported that integrating Sri Lankan Hindus into inter-religious attempts at resolving ethnic conflict, regardless of time period, was in itself problematic due to various additional contentions existing between compatriot religious communities. Specially considered here were the alleged controversies surrounding Christian evangelism, as well as the trend of bellicose fundamentalism amongst Sri Lanka's majority Buddhist community. In one sense such remains unconfirmed, due to participants appearing to be generally appreciative of religious pluralism, although there may be grounds to infer that not all Hindus within this context may possess such a positive view of their neighbouring faith communities. Primary interview participants made it patently clear that they perceived fundamentalist contingents amongst Sri Lanka's Buddhist community as being generally a force disruptive to successful inter-religious cooperation. Specifically this Buddhist fundamentalism

features a fear and critique of Christian and Islamic proselytization, rebuking the perceived moral shortcomings of Christianity and Islam, and also the notion of Islam as conducive to sectarian violence. For example these are among the primary concerns of Sri Lanka's controversial Buddhist fundamentalist activist group 'Bodu Bala Sena', which has gained recent notoriety for its sustained 'anti-halal campaign' (The Economist 2013).

Participant responses suggested that these concerns are not likely shared by Sri Lanka's Hindu community; however, Hinduism and the above Abrahamic faiths do contrast on similar moral principles as does Buddhism, and so perhaps there are Sri Lankan Hindus who would not be so tolerant of these faiths as the primary interview participants claimed to be. Note also how participants seemed to be suggesting here that Buddhist fundamentalism overlooks Hinduism, although prior hypothesizing considered the notion of '*dhammadipa*' as potentially problematic in terms of Hindu-Buddhist relations. However, from the secondary interview data it is evident that Buddhists can be critical of Hinduism according to the mythologically derived concept of *dhammdipa*. Accordingly it is possible that some Buddhist fundamentalists could have exacerbated relations with Sri Lankan Hindus in certain areas, and that this may entail that some Hindus would thus avoid inter-religious activity where Buddhists would be present. Given primary interview responses though, one should remain incredulous as to this sentiment being either widespread or commonly vocalized, as the only contentions ascribed to Buddhist fundamentalists in Sri Lanka are instead directed towards the Muslim and Christian communities. In this respect then, the hypothesis here concerned may not be entirely discounted without a more expansive enquiry which acknowledges a much wider base of

participant responses to account for a greater proportion of the Sri Lankan Hindu community.

9.4. Hypothesized Impediment 4: The Religious and Political Affiliations of Inter-Religious Peace Organizations

Chapter 5 elaborated on discussion from the previous chapter by hypothesizing how firstly the inter-religious contentions identified applying to Sri Lankan Hindus could prevent them from engaging with certain organizations among those considered on the basis of them being associated with a particular religious community. Yet this generally amicable relationship as was outlined above between Hindus and the other religious communities present in Sri Lanka is further reflected in the seeming irrelevance of the religious affiliation of inter-religious peace organizations, with participants purporting to have been involved with those emerging under both Buddhist and Christian influences. Moreover, none of those who had not previously worked with inter-religious peace organizations cited religious affiliation as a matter of concern, meaning ultimately then that this hypothesis seems largely debunked, although there is still scope for it to prove valid for certain Hindus according the aforementioned notion that not all Hindus may be so forbearing with regards to neighbouring religious communities. Additionally though, those organizations considered which lacked religious affiliation did nonetheless seem to instead possess political links which were imagined as having the potential to be problematic for Sri Lankan Hindu engagement, and this aspect of the hypothesis was validated insomuch as State involvement is concerned. Given the hostile relationship between

Sri Lankan State and its Tamil citizens in contemporary times, there is little surprise that many would resist it. This is of course a reference to the COR, an inter-religious peace organization founded and sustained by the Sri Lankan Government, which can clearly be overshadowed by this political connection.

Though unknown to many participants, where it was recognized, two of these three participants proclaimed that they would not consider working with this organization, as they reasoned that because of its political affiliation they could not trust it to act in their best interests. Although not stated by participants, the circumstances surrounding the formation may also lend to the COR further scope for being rebuked by Sri Lankan Hindus. The COR was established by the Sri Lankan Government in 1970, at the beginning of a period where polity were to introduce several controversial measures which would be widely interpreted as 'anti-Tamil'(Little 1999: 48). Such included banning the import of Tamil cultural items from India, prioritizing Sinhala applicants within tertiary education, and curtailing traditional opportunities for Sri Lankan Tamils to pursue university studies in neighbouring India (Richardson 2005: 296-298). Despite the Government's attempts at clarifying these policies as something other than minority discrimination, they nonetheless provoked a surge in Tamil separatist militancy from the largely young middle-class Tamil populace which these policies chiefly disenfranchised (Thangarajah 2004: 266). I would argue that a response of this kind from within the Tamil community would have been one easily anticipated by the Sri Lankan Government, for even if their sincere intention was as innocuous as they profess, how could Sri Lankan Tamils interpret these policies as anything but belligerent and discriminatory? With the COR then set up just prior to these policies coming into place, could it not seem that this organization was

established to placate Tamils via the influence of religious leaders following the introduction of these provocative policies? This ostensibly reinforces the image of the COR as an institution that is in support of a Government agenda which appears to be somewhat negligent of Tamil rights.

Thus it would seem there is further capacity for Sri Lankan Hindus to remain critical of the COR's interest in conflict resolution, should they look deeper into the organization's affiliation to the Sri Lankan State. Obviously though due to the remaining lone participant among the three that were aware of the COR, this is not a sentiment shared by every cognate member of the Sri Lankan Hindu community. However it does call into question the efficacy of the COR as a medium for resolving conflict in Sri Lanka, for the position of distrust in relation to the COR is one seemingly easily reached given the link between Sri Lankan Hinduism and Tamil ethnicity, following the antagonistic relationship between the Sri Lankan Government and the nation's Tamil minority. Despite Perera's opinion that the COR is geared to be a highly effective vehicle of conflict resolution in contemporary Sri Lanka (J Perera 2012), I would on the basis of participant responses remain hesitant about validating this statement given that the COR's political association has the clear potential to alienate individuals representing the Sri Lankan Hindu demographic. The other inter-religious peace organization considered within the purview of this research which possesses affiliation to a political entity is the IRCL-SL, which is of course networked to the United Nations. However the IRC-SL's UN ties remain unclear in terms of how this has impacted upon Sri Lankan Hindus, as no participants reported awareness of this organization. The very absence of this acquaintance is perhaps suggestive that the IRC-SL has been lacking a resolute

grassroots presence in Sri Lanka. However Hoole et al claim that since the cessation of the Civil War the IRC-SL began developing a sole focus on grassroots projects (Hoole et al 2013: 106).

Yet with not a single participant claiming to be familiar with the IRC-SL, one can begin to question the extent to which these objectives have materialized. Moreover, whilst the organization has somewhat ambiguously self-proclaimed its successes, it is challenging somewhat to remain trusting of this self-commendation. Perhaps there could be a political agenda underscoring this seemingly somewhat glamorized promotion of the IRC-SL related to UN publicity, for such would portray the UN as vicariously having commanded a valuable impact upon brokering peace in Sri Lanka – seemingly a desirable restitution following their criticized failure of protecting civilians by neglecting its avowed humanitarian responsibilities during the latter years of the Civil War (Douchet 2012). Of course though such at this point remains only conjecture, it does yet present a cogent consideration as to why the IRC-SL would vaguely self-promote its supposed vital contribution to contextual conflict resolution, in spite of my field data which suggested that its presence is one to a notable extent locally unfamiliar, or at least as far as a number of Sri Lankan Hindus are concerned. On the other hand though maybe one could not have expected the IRC-SL to have effectively engaged the grassroots of the Sri Lankan Hindu community, due to the LTTE having proven themselves capable of assassinating Hindu leaders whom they perceived advocating a goal divergent to their own. Accordingly this ambiguity may be a consequence of being unable to widely access the Sri Lankan Hindu community, for if this was the case, would a UN associated organization wish to

admit further relief shortcomings such as experiencing limited achievement in engaging a religious community so intimately entwined with a major conflict faction?

9.5. Summative Statement of Key Implications

Thus whilst some hypothesized disincentives came to be verified through the results of this research, others were not conclusively determined. The mid-war period of the contemporary timeframe entailed a series of strains were cast upon the Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peacebuilding; however, with the transition into the post-war period, the key issue of organized Tamil separatist militancy has been effectively negated. Furthermore, the experience of the Civil War has amounted to a trend of war-weariness among Sri Lankan Hindus. Both these considerations appear to imply that inter-religious peace organizations are able to enjoy an increase of Sri Lankan Hindu engagement, meaning that the Sri Lankan Hindu responses to inter-religious peace initiatives have the potential to become positively strengthened by the cessation of the Civil War. However there are still factors within the post-war period which could continue to hamper a positive Sri Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives from developing. Specifically these revolve around sustained embittered attitudes towards the Sri Lankan Government, coupled with a Tamil cultural applaud of martial heroics and Hindu ethical frameworks which can justify armed retaliation against perceived oppressors. Evidently such has the potential to re-inspire the validity of separatist violence[89], and thus prevent the Sri

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[89] Particularly as the Sri Lankan Government continues to be portrayed as a tyrannical regime by many among the Tamil minority due to its recent attempts at quelling any accusations of wartime atrocities, despite compelling criminalizing evidence having surfaced under an international investigation (Höglund & Orjuela 2012: 100).

Lankan Hindu relationship to inter-religious peace initiatives from burgeoning. However inter-religious peace organizations appear in a position to counteract this potential should they opt to publically highlight among Sri Lankan Hindus[90] the root of the conflict in contemporary Sri Lanka so as to reveal its grassroots social causes, thereby presenting their method of inter-religious engagement as a seemingly more effective means of resolving the lingering conflict than violent insurrection against the State.

Inter-religious peace organizations it seems then may nevertheless still be able to benefit further from circumstances of Sri Lanka's post-war period in terms of galvanizing their relationship to the Hindu community. Not only do the absence of the LTTE and a relative disappearance of pro-militant Tamil separatists constitute factors here, but also the apparent disillusionment with war, as well as practical concerns of its short-term viability, may entail that non-violent methods such as those offered by inter-religious peace organizations appear the best available alternative to conflict resolution. Despite certain contextual understandings of Hindu ethics appearing able to sanction the pursuit of resolution via violent means, this does not preclude them from engaging in non-violent action, and thus if such appears presently the more feasible then there is scope for inter-religious peace initiatives to expand their relationship with the Sri Lankan Hindu community. However, as the primary interview responses have demonstrated, the specific non-violent approach of inter-religious peace organizations must also contend with a seemingly significant degree of scepticism and uncertainty concerning their ability to achieve contextual conflict resolution. Furthermore the original rise of militant Tamil separatism has been

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[90] Perhaps in particular those of lower socio-economic status, for as Chapter 7 suggests, this may be where the greatest support of separatist militancy lies.

attributed to the Sri Lankan Government's rebuff of non-violent Tamil rights activism (Wilson 1994: 84), and so could its subsequent disregard of inter-religious peace organizations – yet another non-violent approach to social justice – maintain the necessity or desirability of Tamil separatism as a means of safeguarding Tamil dignity, especially when individuals within the community are continuing to publically promote such as an effectual way of achieving this? Though certain considerations here presented by participants such as available funding and Governmental support may to an extent rightfully contribute to this doubt, there is on the contrary the issue of some Hindus appraising the utility of inter-religious peace initiatives with only a limited understanding of contextual conflict dynamics.

Evidently then there may be a need for inter-religious peace initiatives to promote themselves to Sri Lankan Hindus in a way which articulates their theoretical relevance to the conflict of contemporary Sri Lanka in order to overcome this underdeveloped bias against their utility. The focal point of this address would need to amend the misconception that the conflict is ultimately rooted within the Sri Lankan authorities, when such are actually only representative of an electorate which advocates these contentious sentiments. Accordingly this existing scepticism and uncertainty regarding the utility of inter-religious peace organizations because they appear incapable of influencing the high politics of Sri Lanka, would essentially be rendered a moot point if one re-envisions the nature of the conflict as arising from the grassroots electorate level to which access is more easily available. Moreover this research has discovered an apparent virtue of the Sri Lankan Hindu community in terms of its potential for forming a robust relationship with inter-religious peace organizations, where its compatibility with inter-religious cooperation is concerned.

According to the field data amassed in this research, it would appear that Sri Lankan Hindus are notably forbearing with regards to the other religions contextually present, and thus claimed to not reject inter-religious engagement on the grounds of it necessitating interaction with these other religions. In this sense then, the Sri Lankan Hindu community appears fundamentally primed towards being receptive towards the notion of inter-religious peace initiatives. Whilst this apparent pattern of religious tolerance among Sri Lankan Hindus may seem highly advantageous in terms of enhancing the prospective successes of inter-religious peace initiatives, one cannot dismiss the oppugning concerns also raised within this research that such may not be representative of all Hindus or indeed elements of the island's other religious communities, owing ostensibly in either case primarily to the continuity of chauvinistic Buddhist absolutism.

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List of Abbreviations

COR   Congress of Religions

IRC-SL   Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka

IRPF   Inter-Religious Peace Foundation

JHU   Jathika Hela Uramaya

LTTE   Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

NEIFR   North East Inter-Faith Forum for Reconciliation

NGO   Non-governmental organization(s)

PRIO   International Peace Research Institute, Oslo

SLA   Sri Lankan Army

UN   United Nations

Appendix A - Consent Form for Participation in Interview Research

(N.B. For conducting secondary interview research, this form was adapted so that the final bullet-point of Clause 3 was omitted, and the first paragraph of Clause 2 instead read as follows:

'Should you decide to volunteer in this research, you will be asked to participate in a single interview, within which you will be asked several questions on the topic previously identified and explained to you by the researcher, which will be related in some way to inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka')

Dear Interview Candidate,

My name is Michael Tilley, and I am currently a PhD student in Faculty of Education & Theology at York St John University in the UK under the supervision of Professor Pauline Kollontai. I would like to invite you to consider participating in my Religious Studies doctoral research as an interviewee on the subject of inter-religious peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. Further details of this study may be found within the information that follows, which is intending to fully acquaint you with the nature and aims of my research including the role in which you would be expected to undertake as a participant.

Please consider **all** of the information below carefully before deciding whether or not you would like to confirm your participation in this research. Should you thereafter consent to participation in this research, then please sign your name and date this document under the final section entitled 'Agreement' as confirmation of this, and then return it to me at your earliest convenience. If you decide against participation in this research, then simply disregard this document and I would then ask that you please inform me of your decision.

1. Purpose of the research:

The aim of this research is to examine both the opinions and experiences of Sri Lankan Hindus regarding inter-religious peacebuilding, between 26th July 1983 and the present day. I wish to find out whether Sri Lankan Hindus have been working with inter-religious peace organizations, and if they have, what was the experience like for them. If they have not worked with inter-religious peace organizations, I am interested to find out why this is. I am also interested to find out generally what Hindus think of this approach to making peace in Sri Lanka.

My reason for conducting this particular study is that I am intending on creating an original piece of academic research in order to qualify for the award of 'Doctor of Philosophy' (PhD). In doing this, I am simultaneously attempting to provide an insight into the Hindu community's relationship to inter-religious attempts at conflict resolution in Sri Lanka, so as to make a welcome contribution to the wider field studying the relationship between religion and peace-making.

I am not producing this research in partnership with any government or political organization. This research project is wholly mine, and is funded by York St John University where I am completing my doctoral studies. York St John University does not possess any political alliance, and my personal interest in the project is neutral.

You may wish to state or suggest during the interview that you are aware of illegal activity that has happened or is ongoing, such as that related to Tamil militancy. You are free to do this without fear of being identified, and I will not under any circumstances report you to any authority.

2. Requirements of Participants:

Should you decide to volunteer in this research, you will be asked to participate in a single interview, within which you will be asked several questions about your knowledge and experiences of inter-religious peace organizations in Sri Lanka, from July 1983 until the present day. You will also be asked for your views on inter-religious engagement in terms of its usefulness as a method of conflict resolution in Sri Lanka, including questions about inter-religious relations in Sri Lanka and the issue of Tamil separatism.

Interviews can be conducted either via telephone, email or in person depending on your preference whilst also taking into account that which is most suitable for present circumstances. For example, geographical distance between researcher and

participant may mean the possibility of conducting a 'face to face' interview would be very difficult at certain times.

I would ask that in all questions you choose to answer that you do so as accurately as possible, though you are not in any sense obligated to answer any of the questions asked whatsoever. As such, you may choose to not answer any interview question without incuring penalty or coersion.

With your permission, an audio recording may be taken of interviews conducted in person or via telephone to supplement my notes. If you do this, you will not be asked to state your name on the recording, or any other details which may indicate your personal identity. All interview notes and recordings will be kept in a tightly secured environment as per strict university guidelines.

Before conducting the actual interview I will ask if you are comfortable with the use of audio recording during your interview, and you are entirely free to request that it is not used and I will honour this decision without question.

3. Eligibility for Participation

In order to qualify for participation in this research, you must confirm that you meet the following criteria:

- You are Sri Lankan national who has lived in Sri Lanka for majority of your adult life, including many years during the Civil War.

- You are older than 20 years of age.

- You identify yourself in terms of religious adherence as Hindu, meaning that you subscribe to the beliefs and practices associated with being Hindu.

4. Time required:

The interview will require approximately half an hour to an hour of your time, depending on the depth of your relevant knowledge base and amount of questions you are able or willing to answer.

5. Potential Risks Factors to Participants:

Though none of the questions asked within the interview will be directly concerned with discussing details of violence, participating in this research may still cause emotional distress if you have any painful memories which run the risk of resurfacing due to discussing events that happen during a time of war.

Firstly, I would strongly advise you to avoid participating in this research if you suffered greatly during this time and believe that you are still vulnerable to these experiences. Secondly, if you agree to participate in the interview and suffer emotionally as a consequence – no matter how long after the interview has taken

place – I will ensure that you are directed towards the appropriate source of support to address your issues. Should you appear distressed at any during the interview, I will immediately bring the interview to an end.

6. Benefits of Participation:

You may not receive any personal benefit for your participation, and please note that no reward – monetary or otherwise - will be offered or provided to you for your participation.

7. Confidentiality Pledge and Use of Results:

Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential, for at no point within this research will your actual identity be revealed. You will be assigned a random cryptic alias (such as 'Participant 1', or 'Participant 22' for example) which will in no way be suggestive of your actual persona. Anyone who may help me transcribe your responses will only know you by this anonymous name. Any recording of your interview will be erased as soon as it has been transcribed. The interview transcript, which I repeat will not feature your true name, will be kept only until the research is complete and has been approved by examiners.

A key which links your real identity to your given alias will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a secure office, and no one else other than the researcher will have

access to it. It will be destroyed following the completion of my thesis, which is expected to be no later than the end of 2015. The data you give me will be used directly in the main body of the thesis, though it also may be used as the basis for subsequent articles or presentations. Your name or any information which would personally identify you will be removed from any such publications or presentations.

8. Terms of Participation and Conditions of Withdrawal:

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw immediately from the study at any time without question, complication or consequence. You may withdraw by simply informing me that you no longer wish to participate. You may also choose to avoid any question asked of you during the interview process whilst otherwise continuing your participation in the rest of the study.

Should you have initially accepted participation in this research and consequently participated through the interview process, you still have the right to have your responses removed from my research. If you come to this decision after participating, then please contact me as soon as you are able and I will perform your request with no questions asked.

Please note though that there is a deadline for having your interview responses removed from my research and it is currently set for 30th September 2014, for shortly after this date my work is likely to become published for examination and

therefore   unable   to   be   edited.

Researcher's Contact Details:

If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Michael Tilley

Faculty of Education & Theology

York St John University

Lord Mayor's Walk

York

YO31 7EX

United Kingdom

077432606463

m.tilley@yorksj.ac.uk

You can also use these details to contact me about the progress of research, as well as to inform me if you wish to have your interview responses removed from my research, or to report any suffering that has resulted from participation. In addition,

you may also contact the York St John University faculty member supervising this research for similar reasons by any of the means listed below:

Professor Pauline Kollontai

Faculty of Education & Theology

York St John University

Lord Mayor's Walk

York

YO31 7EX

United Kingdom

0044 1904 876573/876526

p.kollontai@yorksj.ac.uk

Agreement:

The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained and therefore I now agree to participate in this study of my own will, in full understanding of what is expected of participants. I understand that I am able to withdraw my participation at any time in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined above, without incurring consequence.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix B – Script for Primary Interview Data Collection

Preliminary Briefing:

I would like to ask you a set of questions as a confirmed participant in my research. I would ask that you answer any questions you choose in an accurate manner, although you are in no way obligated to answer any questions you do not want to. If you would prefer to not answer any of the interview questions, then simply inform me that you do not wish to answer a particular question and I will move onto the next one. You may also freely withdraw from participation at any point during the course of the interview by informing me of your decision to do so. Please also note that as the interviewer, I retain the right to terminate the interview at any given point if I believe it would be in the best interests of you the participant, myself, or the research in the general, to do so. Thank you very much for your cooperation, we may now proceed to the interview questions if you agree to these terms.

Interview Questions:

1. Please could you state your ethnic identity?

2. Are you aware of any of the following inter-religious organisations or institutions – the Sarvdoaya Shramadana Movement, the Inter-Religious

Peace Foundation, the Congress of Religions, the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka?

3. Have you ever participated in any of the following organizations' work during the Civil War period - the Sarvdoaya Shramadana Movement, the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation, the Congress of Religions, the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka?

4. Have you ever participated in any of the following organizations' work since the end of the Civil War - the Sarvdoaya Shramadana Movement, the Inter-Religious Peace Foundation, the Congress of Religions, the Inter-Religious Council of Sri Lanka?

5. If you have been involved in the work of any of the organisations/institutions mentioned in Questions 4, 5 & 6, how would you best describe your experience(s)?

6. If you have been involved in the work of any of the organisations/institutions listed in Question 4, 5 & 6, how would you feel about further participation should the opportunity arise?

7. If you have not previously been involved in the work of inter-religious peace organizations, how would you feel about doing so if the opportunity arises in the future?

8. Are there any of inter-religious peace organizations/institutions mentioned in Question 5 that you would be hesitant or not willing to participate with?

9. How important do you consider inter-religious interaction to be with regards to building and maintaining peace in Sri Lanka?

10. How successful do you believe efforts to facilitate inter-religious interaction have been so far in the process of conflict resolution in Sri Lanka?

11. Do you believe that there is currently peace in Sri Lanka, and how concerned are you that war or extensive violence between Sri Lanka's ethnic groups may reoccur in the near future?

12. Would you say that there have been any challenges so far encountered in getting the different religious groups in Sri Lanka to cooperate with each other that would affect the success of inter-religious peacebuilding?

13. Would working with an inter-religious peace organization where Christians would be present at all affect your decision to participate, and has it done so in the past?

14. Would working with an inter-religious peace organization where Muslims would be present at all affect your decision to participate, and has it done so in the past?

15. Would working with an inter-religious peace organization where Buddhists would be present at all affect your decision to participate, and has it done in the past?

16. Did the presence of the LTTE ever affect your decision to engage with inter-religious peace organizations during the Civil War period?

17. Do you feel that Tamil separatist ideology is still a significant force in Sri Lanka, and does this opinion in any way affect your current chances of engaging with inter-religious peace organizations?

18. Research has demonstrated that the LTTE attempted to procure support from Sri Lankan Hindus. How successful do you believe they were in gaining this and why?