



Ethno-Religious Segregation in Plural Societies: Impact of Post –Easter Sunday Attack of Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the nature of societal beliefs of Sinhala-Catholics to understand if there is any ethno- religious fragmentation from Sinhala Catholics' perspective in the post-Easter Sunday attack context. The study was qualitative in design with a constructivist philosophy. The in-depth interview technique was employed to collect data from twenty respondents selected through purposive sampling from the Galle Catholic parish. The inductive approach of thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The main focus was to examine the Sinhala Catholics' perspective on the Muslim community. A group of Muslim suicide bombers who were believed to have links with international Muslim extremists engaged in the attack in the name of Islam, which took the lives of innocent Catholics. They attended holy mass in three different churches and some civilians in Sri Lanka. The transcriptions of the responses were coded and analyzed for themes. As a result, three themes emerged: religious value anxiety, fundamentalism phobia, and a positive sense of security appeared high intensity. The spiritual value anxiety being the highest intense theme shows a collective memory fluctuation among Sinhala Catholics in the Galle parish between religious teachings and the practical application of those in real-life situations. However, the results of this study show that there is no apparent ethno- religious fragmentation between Sinhala-Catholics and Muslims in the Galle parish as far as the out-group relationship and the sense of security are concerned, though the Sri Lankan pluralistic society has ethnoreligious divisions.

Keywords: *Ethno-Religious Segregation, Parish, religious fundamentalism, Societal beliefs*