

RE-ESTABLISHING TAMIL-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP AS PART OF FINDING A DURABLE SOLUTION TO THE ETHNIC CONFLICT OF SRI LANKA

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Much have been written and done on the necessity of the north (Tamils) and South (Sinhalese) dialogue as one of the conditions for creating conducive environment for establishing lasting peace in Sri Lanka. Less attention has been paid so far to understand the existing nature of relationship between Tamils and Muslims especially in the conflict affected areas of north and east and to find out whether the existing relationship is conducive enough to be a catalyst to strengthen the situation of peace if that is established in the region.

The evidences show that the relationships between these two communities have been deteriorating in the recent past due to various conflict-induced reasons. At the same time, it is also now realised that a favourable Tamil-Muslim relationship in the north and east is an essential part of resolving the ethnic conflict of the country. Among many reasons, numerical and proportional importance, inter-mixed living and linguistic similarities of these two communities (Tamils and Muslims) in the region (north and east) for resolution are important in taking account of the need of re-establishing ethnic relationship.

The paper identifies the foundations of ethnic relationships between these two communities. It also traces the nature and reasons of changing the relationships between the two communities. It identifies the ways of resolving differences in a common addendum of establishing peace and maintaining peace through Tamil-Muslim relationships of the north and east.

The information for the paper comes from studies conducted by the author on this subject. One of the sources of information of the paper is a project which was on the aspect of re-establishing Tamil-Muslim relationship in the Northern Province and was carried out by the author and his research team in 2005. The rest of the information to the paper comes from studies and observations that author have engaged and made in the north and the east of Sri Lanka in the recent past.

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