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Religious Tolerance and Ethnic Harmony in the Emerging Pluralism of the Kandyan Kingdom in Sri Lanka

Ramesha Jayaneththi

Department of History, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya

Email: rameshajaya@gmail.com

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එමිලේ චූර්කයීම් පෙන්වා දෙන ආකාරයට ආගම සමාජය පිළිබඳ සංකේතාත්මක නියෝජනයක් පමණක් නොවේ. එය සමාජයේම නිපයුමක් වේ. සමාජ සංස්ථාවක් ලෙස ආගම් මානව සබඳතාවල කොටසක් වන අතර එය සමාජ කණ්ඩායම් එකට බැඳ තැබීමට උපකාරී වේ. එක් ආගමික අනන්‍යතාවයක සමාජකයින් තමන්ව එක් කාලපරාසයක රාශිභූතගත කරන අතර ඒ හරහා සුවිශේෂී සංකල්පීය පරාසයක සහ කල්පිත රාමුවක ඔවුන් තම කණ්ඩායම් අනන්‍යතාවය හඳුනා ගනී. නමුත් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ඉතිහාසය සලකා බලන විට බෞද්ධාගම සහ හින්දු ආගම වැනි ආගමික අනන්‍යතාවන් එකිනෙකා කෙරෙහි සම්මිශ්‍රිත සේම වියුක්ත අනන්‍යතා සහිතව පසු වූ බව පෙනේ. විශේෂයෙන් මහනුවර යුගයේදී බෞද්ධාගම ප්‍රධාන ආගම බවට පත් වුවද හින්දු, ඉස්ලාම් සහ කතෝලික ආගම් වෙත කැපීපෙනෙන අන්දමේ ආගමික සංහිදියාවක් පවත්වා ගෙන ගිය බව මූලාශ්‍රය මඟින් තහවුරු වේ. එම ආගම්වලට සිද්ධස්ථාන පවත්වාගෙන යාමේ හා පුදපූජා පැවැත්වීමේ නිදහස ලබා දුන්නා පමණක් නොව විහාර දේවාලගම් ක්‍රමය වැනි බෞද්ධ අනන්‍යතා ඇති ආගමික සංස්ථාවන්වල සේවය සඳහා අන්‍ය ආගමිකයින් සම්බන්ධ කර ගනු ලැබිණ. එබැවින් මේ පසුබිම තුළ නායක්කර් රාජ වංශය වැනි සම්පූර්ණ හින්දු සම්බන්ධයක් ඇති පිරිසකට ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ දේශපාලන බලය වෙත ප්‍රවේශ වීම අසීරු නොවුණි.

මූලාශ්‍රය: මහනුවර රාජධානිය, ආගමික සංහිදියාව, වාර්ගික සමගිය, විහාර දේවාල ගම්, රාජකාරී ක්‍රමය

Introduction

Religion and ethnicity are diverse factors in a society; however, their root causes appeared from the base of the community. The word of religion can be interpreted in a naturalistic way or in a religious way. In a naturalistic way, religion can be identified as a purely human phenomenon (Hick 2004: 1). Emile Durkheim suggests that religion does not only a symbolic

representation of the society but it is a product of it. As a social institution, religions are a part of human relationships and they help to bind a social group together. Therefore, members of a specific religious identity synchronized them in one temporality, thereby occupying a single ideological context and an imaginative space. In a religious way, religion can be interpreted as a relation to God or the gods a believer considers as sacred. In some religions there was a strong philosophical background and later the institution of the religion established their rituals. Besides, religions show the collections of beliefs and exotic cultural patterns. Some religions have a deep understanding of the world that relates humanity to an order of existence. Many religions have narratives, symbols and sacred histories that aim to explain the meaning of life. Therefore religions are not mere spiritual constructions. According to Emile Durkheim, religion can be understood as a force that created within individuals a sense of moral obligation to adhere to demands of the society. He also mentioned that the source of religion and morality lies in collective consciousness, rather than in individual minds (Durkheim 2008: 42-43). Moreover, every religion has a social responsibility and these responsibilities help to develop inter human relationships among members of the community.

In Sri Lanka, from the ancient kingdoms, religions have played this diverse role to develop the collective conciseness in the society. With elaborated religious and cultural activities, religion also acted as a designer of the ethnic harmony in this multi ethnic society. The Kandyan kingdom was an obvious example to understand the establishment of ethnic harmony while practicing various religious activities. The Kandyan Kingdom was the last independent monarchy in Sri Lanka. The kingdom of Kandy was founded as a satellite dynasty by the king Wickramabahu III (1357-1374)in the Gampola era. From 1591 to 1815 A.D. the Kingdom had shown a significant contribution to control the expansion of three colonial powers who established political, economic and religious authority in the coastal area. The kingdom had played a vital role in protecting cultural characteristics in not only among Sinhalese but also among Tamils and Muslims. The consciousness of Buddhism and administrative and structural assimilation of the Kandyan kingdom helped the integration of ethnic groups into full social participation through various activities. According to some scholars like Michael Roberts (2003) the kingdom of Kandy emerged as the only Sinhalese state after the collapse of Kotte kingdom and the heirs to the idea of *Sinhale* (Roberts 2003: 11). But the ethnic plurality and the various functions based on ethnic and caste co-existence of the kingdom draw a very complex and impressive image of people in that era, than these kinds of shallow observations.

It is true that, when the Sinhalese traditions are considered, Kandy was an oasis to retain customs of Sinhalese when Portuguese and Dutch changed and modernized the society in the low country Sri Lanka. The establishment of the kingdom in Kandyan highlands was a reflection of the transfer of power of the Sinhalese capital from low lands to hills which could not easily overthrown by the colonial powers or their weaponries. Many indigenous nobles, Buddhist monks and various caste groups drifted to Kandy and expected a security from the Kandyan kings. Therefore, the Kandyan period was a remarkable era of the outstanding cultural heritage of the Sinhalese. After being the capital of Sri Lanka, the Kandyan kingdom was

ruled by two main dynasties that was a vibrant reflection of the ethnic and religious harmony in the society. They were the Sinhalese dynasty, which began with the king Wimaladarmasooriya I (1591-1604), and the South Indian Nāyakkar dynasty from 1739 A.D.

Development of Buddhism and its ritual culture in the Kandyan kingdom

Under these two dynasties, both Buddhism and Hinduism were prominent in the kingdom where the kings gave patronage to the development of these religious traditions. From the beginning as the capital city, the kingdom acted as the protector of Buddhism which was accepted as the main religion of the state. Both Sinhalese and Tamil dynasties and the royal court considered the foremost religion as Buddhism. According to the old tradition, the tooth relic of the Buddha was the symbol of the King's legitimacy. Therefore kings used to build the temple of the tooth relic near the royal palace. As an example, King Narendra Sinha built a new palace in Kundasale instead of the main palace in Senkadagala and he also built a temple for the Tooth relic near his new palace. In the temple named Shailabimbarama in Dodandoowa, there was a mural painting relating to daily offerings of this Kundasale temple for the Tooth relic.

Not only the tooth relic but also Buddhist monks in the capital played a vital role of balancing the political power of the king and the administrative circles. Especially in the ceremony of coronation of kings, monks played a unique role. Buddhist monks had the main responsibility of advising both Sinhalese and Nāyakkar kings. Reverend Welivita Saranankara Sangaraja was a classic example. Buddhist monks of the two chapters of Malwatte and Asgiriya conducted daily rituals in the inner chamber of the temple of the Tooth relic or Dalada Maligawa. Kings continuously participated in these rituals. Some Nāyakkar Hindu kings like Keerthi Sri Rajasinha was a great devotee of Buddhism. In his time, the temple of the tooth relic was a very live place and elaborate rituals were held. Moreover, the king donated many lands to the upliftment of the Dalada Maligawa. In addition, king Keerthi Sri was credited with establishing the Buddhist revival in the kingdom. Under the guidance of Reverend Welivita Saranankara Sangaraja the king successfully invited bhikkus from Thailand to revive higher ordination.

Many Buddhist temples were built by Sinhalese and Tamil kings evenly. Some scholars believe those Tamil kings built and treated Buddhist temples equally because of their determination to gain popularity from the Sinhalese community's foreign ancestries. When silver or copper plates (*Sannas*) which they granted with lands to temples are considered this opinion appears doubtful. Nāyakkar kings had shown their eagerness to grant lands and develop temples not only around the citadel but also in the far places like Pollonnaruwa and Anuradhapura (Dammananda 1969: 25). Therefore, it can be argued that those Tamil kings' main determination was not to acquire popularity from the general public. There had to be some unique purpose for those kinds of grants.

This Tamil Nāyakkars came to the scenario with the arrangements of marital alliances between Sinhalese kings and the princesses who belonged to South Indian Madurai Nāyakas dynasty in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Beginning with the king Rajasinha II (1635-

1687), Kandyan kings married to South Indian princess. Robert Knox stated about the status of the King Rajasinha's queen as below.

"His right and lawful Queen, who was a Malabar brought from the coast, is still living but has not been with him as is known this twenty years, remaining in the city of Cande...." (Knox Vol II, 1989:111)

In that era, South Indian Nāyakkars became an influential aristocracy in the Kandyan court (Gombrich 1988: 178). After the Sinhalese king, NarendraSinha (1707 -1739 A.D.) died without an offspring, the brother of his Madurai Nāyak queen succeeded the throne in 1739 under the name of Sri Vijaya Raja Sinha (1739-1747). There were several inter-ethnic marriages even in Nāyakkar era. A Sinhalese aristocrat Mampitiya Disava's daughter Mampitiya Dugganna Unnanse was the favourite mistress of Nāyakkar king Keerthi Sri(1747-1781) to whom she bore two sons and six daughters. After the king Keerthi Sri's death she was the mistress of his successor King Rajadhi Raja Sinha (1782–1798). The daughters of this noble lady married Tamil relatives of the king (Lawrie, 1896: 528).

It can be assumed that being Hindu devotees Nāyakkars had a willingness to develop both Hinduism and Buddhism equally. Some South Indian Nāyakas had the practice of developing Hindu shrines and giving patronages to them. According to V. Vriddhagirisan (1942), Shivappa Nāyak in Tanjore who was a believing Vaishnava constructed Gopura and walls in Tiruwannamalei and Vriddachalam Shrines in South India. He granted many donations for the wellbeing of these shrines. According to one inscription, in 1579 Tanjore Nāyaks gave patronage not only for Hindu shrines but also for Buddhist temples (Vriddhagirisan 1942: 31-32). According to Noboru Karashima (1976), Nāyakas can be identified as lease-holders of Temple Lands in South India. Karashima further stated that

There are many Tamil inscriptions of Vijayanagar times which are inscribed on the walls of a Siva temple in Devikapuram, North Arcot District, Tamilnadu, in South India. Thirteen of these inscriptions record the lease of the temple lands to individuals or institutions on certain conditions. Not only in these Devikapuram inscriptions but also in the inscriptions of many other localities do we find similar cases of the leasing of the temple lands. As for the lease-holders, the first thing we notice on reading the thirteen inscriptions is that five out of the thirteen recipients of the land were Nāyakas. They are: Tirumalai-nāyaka (No. 352), Sada Siva-nāyaka (353), Koniappa-nāyaka (369), ... iva.- nāyaka (387) and Namassiva-nāyaka (389). (Karashima 1976: 228-229)

According to the above statement it is obvious that Nāyakas in South India had continued the practice of temple lands system as lease holders and donators. On the other hand, Tamil kings in Kandy exactly knew that the social power of Buddhist monks was absolute than those of the kings. Therefore, they needed to satisfy religion networks in the Kandyan kingdom. Not only that, as an administrative body Nāyakkars needed to re-establish

the previous administrative mechanisms and practise them which was compounded with lands, religious institutes and people. Especially service tenure system related to temple lands was more important to keep alive this combination.

According to historical sources the crown, religion, functionaries and land ownership were mutually interdependent in the Kandyan kingdom. This well-organized land tenure system connected to fundamental features in the kingdom was the form of occupation of many peasants. The complex caste structure and the social hierarchy were combined with the land ownership and the service tenure system in the kingdom. During this period, theoretically all lands belonged to the king but practically there were many independent and private lands which belonged to aristocrats and other civilians. '*Gabadagam*', '*Bisogam*' and '*Kumaragam*' represented the villages of the King, Queens and other princes respectively. Civilians, who possessed these lands, provided their functional duties or service tenure and the periodical quota or '*Muthbettuwa*'.

As previously mentioned, one of the most important institutes which maintained the existing social structure and religious activities in Sri Lanka is the temple land system in Kandy. This system has been termed as 'monastic landlordism' by Max Weber in his book "The Religions of India" (Weber 1958: 257). With this land tenure system Buddhist monasteries and Hindu shrines were wealthy and powerful institutes of the society in the central Ceylon. Not only that, especially these Buddhists monks were able to influence the political authority during the Kandyan kingdom and British colonial era. Considering this Buddhist monastic power Hans-Dieter Evers has argued Kandyan king donate many land grants to strengthen the Buddhist monks in order to weaken the Sinhalese aristocracy in royal administration (Evers 1967:703-704). Therefore, Buddhism and Buddhist monastic power have continued to play a powerful role in the politics of colonial and postcolonial Sri Lanka. Those temple lands or '*Vihāra* and '*Devalagam*' were granted for the wellbeing of temples and shrines. To gather the harvest of temple lands and to continue functional duties of temples and shrines, this land tenure system was very important. Unlike in the previous periods after the beginning of Nāyakkār dynasty (1739-1815 A.D.), there was a development of the temple land tenure system. With this research, there is an attempt to identify the bond between temple lands and natives that was based on religious harmony.

Except those attempting to revive the Buddhism, Kandy was a territory which promoted the Buddhism with cults of the little tradition (Obeyesekere 1963 :140-153). According to Gananath Obeyesekere the little tradition is the 'whole' culture of the little community or peasant society. Peasant cultures are 'wholes'; but he agrees with Redfield that those cultures were not isolates. Peasant cultures or the little tradition are linked with the great tradition through a common cultural idiom, which establish channels of communication between the two traditions and sets up standards of mutual reference and influence. The collapse of the great tradition and the extension of the compound multi-cultural little tradition was one of the highlighted trends in the Kandyan era. Therefore, many Kandyans equally worshiped Buddhism and other gods in Hinduism or in the little tradition. Knox gave a fair description on this fascinating trend.

With highlighting many Gods, devils and remarkable cults he stated that one of their great and frequent businesses with their gods was the recovery of health. And Kandyans believed god or devil make them sick by his power only it is to restore them (Knox Vol II 1989:227). Therefore, they had willingness to absorb new deities to their pantheon of gods and cluster of devils. This consciousness caused to attract new Hindu gods to their religious beliefs. Not only among peasants, worshiping of the multiple gods was a practice among Kandyan aristocrats to some extent. Both Ganantha Obeysekara and John Holt have showed that the divine pantheon of popular Kandyan cosmology was a mirror image of the fundamental power and authority structure in the Kandyan kingdom (Holt 1996: 55).

Development of Hinduism and its cult in the Kandyan kingdom

By considering the Sinhalese pantheon in the Kandyan kingdom, anyone can argue that a moderated version of Hinduism was also widely popular among Kandyans in the citadel as well as in the rural Kandy. In addition to the Buddhist rituals in the temple of tooth relic premises, four *dewalas* or shrines were dedicated to gods Vishnu, Kataragama, Nata and Pattini (Kannagi). During the period of the last Sinhalese kings and the Nāyakkar kings the Tamil gods like Ganesh and Skanda Kumāra were worshiped by Tamil community. Later these gods were popular among majority of Buddhists. After god Skanda Kumāra or god Kataragama was converted as a multi ethnic god, his main shrine in Kandy was administrated by Sinhalese peoples. But its main duties such as *Basnayaka nilaya* and *Kapu nilaya* were held by traditional South Indian Brahman families. In Kirapone village there were several tenants belonging to Kandy Kataragama *Dewalaya*. Many Sinhalese and Moors jointly gave their service for *Mulutangei mura* or tenant in the kitchen. Some *Patavili pangu* belonged to Muslims. They had to transport paddy from Kirapone granary to the granary of *dewale* in Kandy. There was one Tamil Chetty who collaborated with other Sinhalese and Muslims and they were attached to *Eliya Mura*. They provided various services including helping cooks in the kitchen and collecting seed paddy from *dewalaya's* paddy fields (Lawrie 1896: 446).

The annual *Esala* procession in Kandy was firstly adorned by these four *dewalas*. Later the procession of the temple of tooth relic was attached to those by the King Keerthi Sri. In Kandyan rural areas, there were many other shrines which were devoted to several gods. Some were Hindu originated gods and some were traditional Sinhalese native gods. Ganegoda Kataragama *dewalaya* in Kalugamuwa was well known among Kandyan Sinhalese. This *dewalaya* was built by imitating South Indian architecture. Not only that Kandy Nata *dewalaya* also represents the Vijayanagar architecture. In addition, Gadaladeniya temple and its *dewalaya* are a reflection of South Indian architecture. A rare temple like Galmaduwa is in the style of Hindu *dewalaya* with high Gopura. It was built by the King Keerthi Sri. After the king heard about the discovery of the cave of Degaldoruwa the construction of Galmaduwa was stopped. Then it remained as an unfinished building. (Lawrie 1896: 258)

There are other several stories which reveal facts about pure Hindu religious activities in the Kandyan kingdom. Munneshwaram *Dewalaya* in Chilaw was famous as an ancient Hindu

devalaya and was developed by Nāyakkar kings. In this era, the kings had granted lands by giving two copper plates to *devalayas*. When considering the patronages which were given by Kandyan kings to ethnic and religious minorities these kinds of copper plates or *sannas* were important. One copper plate was given by the king Sri Vijaya Rajasinha in 1735 A.D. In this *sannasa*, the symbols of sun and moon are notable features. According to the statement on the copper plate the king nominated Dumiguma Sew Mudiyanse to the Basnayaka nilaya of the Aiyana *Kovil* in Munneshwarama. Moreover he allocated labourers to *devalaya* and ordered to collect taxes as the half of the absolute amount collected (Sannas collection SLNA 220/705 :211). Another copper plate was granted by the king Keerthi Sriin 1748A.D. to the Munneshwaram *devalaya*. This one is also related to the *basnayake nilaya*. The king nominated Arasan Kumarap Peruma Vanninara's son MuththanVanninarfor this post. This name is obviously a Tamil originated name and during the Kandyan era most *Vanniars* in the North and North-Central area were Tamils. The king also granted the authority of collecting taxes in this area to the *devalaya* (Sannas Collection SLNA 220/705 :181-182). Also some *Sittuma* or a Palm leaf of court cases related to Munneshwaram *devalaya* show evidence of Sinhalese tenants in the villages. According to this *Sittuma*, when the tenancy of villagers for these lands was not certain, it was a regional court case which decided the matter during the Kandyan kingdom. That case was against some Sinhalese tenants (Sannas collection SLNA 220/667 :55). This is clear evidence that while Tamils acted as a higher authority of this pure Hindu shrine Sinhalese gave their contribution under it as tenants of the service tenure mechanism.

In addition, some Tamil lay people were also granted lands by king. According to Lawrie(1896) one Kandyan king granted Ambana village to a Tamil fisherman named Migomuwa Mudiyanse by a *Sannasa*. The reason to grant this village was the service rendered by the fisherman at the battle of Migomuwa (Negombo). His decedent was Kali Amma, married a Korala in the North central province(Lawrie 1896:38). Besides, some Tamil nobles were able to organize Kandyan villages. During the reign of King Keerthi Sri, he Hindu noble named Rajagopala Kanaka Sinha Pir Pulle Mudaliyar came to Nambadagahawatta in Matale North and formed that village(Lawrie1896 :621). With these activities, a considerable Tamil population was in some villages. In upper Bulathgamathe Hindu population was 50996 in 1886. In Gampola Tamil population was 32715 in 1881. In Lower Dumbara and Upper Dumbara there was a significant Hindu population.

Some Tamils were devoted to provide their service to temple lands of Buddhist temples. In Kandy Colombo road, there was a shrine for god Ganesh in the village Deyyannewala. This shrine was owned by *Chetties* for many years and those *Chetties* supplied lamps for the last five nights of the *Esala* procession in Kandy. According to Lawrie due to some misunderstanding those *Chetties* discontinued the customary supply of oil. Finally in 1887 the *Diyawadana Nilame* and *Basnayaka Nilames* of four *devalas* filed a court case in Kandy against A.R.L. Waliappan *Chetty*. He was the chief of this shrine. But this case was dismissed and decided that it was only a voluntary service (Lawrie 1896: 159). Therefore, it can be argued that in both Hindu and Buddhist temples many Sinhalese, Tamils and even Muslims carried out their services in

order to function the duties smoothly. The Religion and land ownership and the tenure system combined established ethnic harmony.

Muslims and their inter Religious Dialogue

According to these facts it is obvious that Kandyan rulers and people were credited for their religious tolerance. When we consider Muslim community and Islamic religion, once again this fact is true. Muslims were an ethnic and religious minority in the Kandyan kingdom. Muslims came to low country Sri Lanka especially to the harbours like Beruwala from the South Indian commercial network. Consequently, they spoke Tamil language and mainly settled down in the coastal areas like Beruwala and Weligama. Gira Sandesa, Kokila Sandesa and Thisara Sandesa gave evidences that Muslims were inhabited in the port cities in Coastal Sri Lanka. (Azeez, 1907: 18-20).

During the Portuguese and Dutch eras, Muslim merchants were able to develop their trade activities with South Indians with great difficulties. Ibn Batuta mentioned the kindness shown to Muslims by the country folk (Battuta 2005 :256). Probably king Senerath allowed a mosque to be built in Kandy. Early in 1626 the Portuguese expelled the Moore from their settlements and quite a multitude fled to Kandy where Senerath offered them refuge and showed favour. Further Kandyan kings had given equal patronage to even Muslims. The King Senerath and Rajasinha granted two lands in Gampolain 1631 and 1645 to the Muslim physician Sulttan Kuttiya who came from Galle. In addition, he was invited to Kandyan court. These ancestors were known as Galle *vedarala* (Dewaraja, 1994: 91). One of important copper plates is Getaberiya *sannasa* which was granted by King Keerthi Sri Rajasinha. In this copper plate, there was a letter 'z' or 'Sri' as the royal seal and the symbols of sun and moon signifying perpetuity (Bell 1892: 100). This copper plate was granted to Gopala Mudaliya who can be identified as a Moor noble. The Gataberiya village which inhabited by Gopala Mudaliya's ancestors and it was situated in Tunpalata Pattuwa of Paranakuru Korale which belonged to Kegalle district. This village was presented to one of them in recognition of medical aid rendered to an old resident. The Gopala Moors of this village lived there ever since. According to H.C.P. Bell (1892) this Gopala Moors claim to belong to a race called 'MogalPatani'. And there could be a relationship with North India. Most probably this family practiced *Unani* a type of treatment which is specific to Muslims (Bell 1892: 100). They were well recognized as skilful physicians and many villagers came to them for treatments. Not only as physicians but also they had provided faithful service as aristocrats to Kandyan kings. In Rajasinghe II era this family name is mentioned in Dutch records. According to the Getaberiya *sannasa* the loyalty of his family caused to award a large land by the king which belonged to King's aristocrat Moladanda earlier.

Whereas Palkumbure Rajakaruna Vaidyatilaka Gopala Mudaliya has with faithfulness and goodwill performed service to *Mahawasala* (The king's court) by giving information when the rebel of Moladanda attempted to create a rebellion, with intent to do disloyal and hostile acts against the *Mahawasala*.....(Bell 1892:101)

These kinds of stories are mentioned by A.C. Lawrie in his famous Gazetteer of the Central province of Ceylon. Under the village name Ankurana, Lawrie gives a broad description about Moor inhabitants. Even today Akurana is well known as a Muslim region. In 1896, this village was under the Moorman *Arachchi* (village headman). In proclamations of 3rd March and 21st of November 1818, Moormen in this area were exempted from the jurisdiction of Kandyan headmen and their own *arachchi* or area was enlarged. Lawrie gives a folk story about the Muslim inhabitants in this area.

The tradition is that three Arabs made their way to Kandy during the reign of RajaSinha. When the Portuguese attempted an invasion, the king engaged their service to fight the enemy. Ultimately the king was successful and desired the men to settle in the country. They asked for wives from among the Kandyan women. The king gave the encouragement and during the *perahera* the three men boldly carried three Kandyan young women away and concealed them in the place. The relatives then appealed to the king, who advised them that as the Arabs had already taken the women by the hand and so let them away, it was best to let them go. The relatives consented. The men went to Akurana and settled there. These were ancestors of the people of the village (Lawrie 1896: 6).

However by 1886, these Muslims were able to establish a small college as a private institution that led to teach the Koran and Arabic. This story shows two different dimensions of the ethnic harmony in the Kandyan Kingdom. One is that the king allowed and encouraged inter-religious marriages among Moors and Sinhalese. Another dimension is that Sinhalese who were kind and famous for their hospitality considered the purity of their marriages. They didn't easily allow inter caste marriages and inter cultural marriages. The consciousness of Sinhala was powerful. (Pieris1956 : 111) But they equally treated ethnic and religious minorities as their neighbours. Kandyan landownership was open for visitors from the low country including ethnic minorities.

Nevertheless, there are other rare incidents which reveal the disagreement between the Kandyan kings and Muslims in the area. The lands of Moormen in Polgolla were confiscated during the King Keerthi Sri Rajasinhareign. Then it was given to the *Maduwe* Department. According to Dehigama *Diyawadana Nilame's* description in 1827, there were other candidates for the king's throne and those Muslims being interested in another candidate and wanted the procession to go in a different direction from the king's quarters. However, the king was able to secure his government then he confiscated the whole of Muslims' village (Lawrie 1896: 739). In the king Sri Wickrama Rajasingha'sera (1798-1815), another incident happened against Muslims. An English troop from Batticaloa had marched through the village Wendaruwa in lower Dumbara. After that by suspecting Moor men in this village the king ordered to remove them (Lawrie1896: 945). These rare incidents happened because of the unfaithfulness of Muslims to the king. The unfaithfulness was considered as a crime and generally subjected to the capital punishment. However, normally the king acted as a supporter of religious tolerance.

Again, Knox gives impressive evidence about the behaviour of Sinhalese which promoted ethnic and religious harmony in the country. This evidence is another example for king's response to religious harmony.

"None are they charitable only to the poor of their own nation, but as I said to others; and particular to the Moorish beggars, who are *Mahometans* by religion. These have a temple in Cande. A certain former king gave this temple as a privilege, that every free-holders should contribute a *ponnam* to it. And these Moors go to every house in the land to receive it. And if the house be shut, they have power to break it open and to take out of goods to the value of it. They come very confidently when they beg, and they say they come to fulfil the people charity. And the people do liberally relieve them for charity shake."(Knox1989 :247-248)

Primary records of Temple land tenure system are an obvious example for religious activities of Muslims in Buddhist and Hindu temples. Muslims were also attached to the *Badde Samvidana* in the Kandyan kingdom. This systematic mechanism was related to the economic organization in the Kandyan kingdom. *Badde* mechanism depended on the caste hierarchy and not only Sinhalese castes but also Muslims were attached to this system. They belonged to *MadigeBadda* and *Hulan Badda*. This was activated as a part of *Madige Badda*. People belonged to *Madige Badda* like *Karava castes* and Muslims were to supply cattle to transport goods from the Royal palace. *Madige* people transported arecanuts were belonged to Kings from Kandy to Ruwanwella. According to Lona Dewaraja's observations (1994) in the Kandyan highland there were several villages which were named with the word 'Madige'. GalagedaraMadigegama and Dehideniya Madigegama were occupied only by Muslims(Dewaraja, 1994: 104).These Madige villages maintained their Islamic identity by establishing Mosques. There is a story related to a mosque in Galagedara Madige. After Temple Lands Commission was appointed and started land registrations the Lebbe of the mosque in this village claimed to have a field, two gardens and a *chena*(dry land cultivations) exempted from tax. This seems as an imitation of Buddhist and Hindu temple land's rights. However, the claim was rejected.

Therefore, it is obvious that Muslims in Kandy had freedom to maintain intact their identity through their adherence to Islam and distinct features associated with the religion. But they became equal and indispensable participants in the mainstream of the Kandyan kingdom. Under this *Madige Badda* organization, Muslims were also attached to the *Hulan Badda* and worked as merchants and transported goods for the King(Doyly 1929: 66). They used to buy dry fish and salt from coastal areas and bring them to Buddhist Temples whose lands belonged or to the Royal palace. Thus, Muslims who performed to these duties were members of the service tenure system in the Kandyan kingdom. Although they were attached to the service tenure system in these temples they never changed their religion.

Lawrie mentions of some other villages which were famous as Muslim hamlets in the Kandyan area. Tambilegama, Elamalpota, Gongawala, Na-Ula, Hekirilla in Matale, Palagolla in Kotmale, Ramboda, Selagama, Wariyapola and Kohomba Anga in Harispattuwa were these

villages. In Kahatapitiya there was a famous mosque. In this mosque, there was an unpretentious building called "Mekkan Shongeya". It was a burial place of a saint who visited Macca (Lawrie 1896: 395). In some villages, there were not only Muslims but also there were Malays who are considered as an ethnic minority group. Palle and Uda Waradamuna were these kinds of villages. In Kinigoda there was a Muslim village and a mosque. Muslims in this village were similar to Coastal Muslims and they did not engage with Sinhalese although they talked their language in preference to Tamil. In addition, there was an ancient mosque. According to Lawrie some Sinhalese also helped to build Mosques. In Maberiya near to Matale, one Sinhalese named Marukona Mudiyanse built a mosque for Moors (Lawrie 1896: 513). That indicates the attitude of the religious tolerance among nobles and the general public.

Some temple lands belonged to the temple of the tooth relic called *Maligagama* which engaged these Muslims in their services. According to Lawrie's Gazetteer, Akarahaduwa was a village in Matale which belonged to the temple of the tooth relic. A considerable number of villagers were Moor men. In 1896, they obviously supported their *lebbe* and the mosque. In KingKeerthi Sri Rajasinha's era this village was granted to the *Dalada Maligawa*. According to Davy, the villagers were famous for smelting iron with a simple process (Davy 1821 :261). Lawrie identified few *nilapangu* or tenants which belonged to *Dalada Maligawa*. The villagers both Sinhalese and Muslims equally supplied iron and other goods to *DaladaMaligawa*. Some Sinhalese named Kaludurage, Linpitiyage, Ulpathayage and KatuLebbe, Pakir'Tambi who were identified as Muslims used six acres field. Their service tenancy was to give two lumps of iron as village tribute, to give presents to *Vidane* (officer of *DaladaMaligawa*) when he visited the village, to appear yearly before the *Diyawadana Nilame*in of *Dalada Maligawa* with dried fish or venison. Two tenancies were held by some other Muslim men and one Sinhala villager. Their service was to give yearly lump of iron and 50 cents, to provide lodgings and provisions for the *Maligawa* officers when they visit the village. They had to give rice, oil and *Kitul* syrup (honey) and plantations in specific amounts. Belonging to another ten tenancies, some Muslims shared seventeen acres of field. Mainly they had to transport rice and iron via *tavalama* to Kandy.

Aladeniya was another famous *Maligagama* and many Moormen occupied there with providing services to the *Dalada Maligawa*. According to records, also in this village Muslims and Sinhalese were attached and equally provided their service as one tenant. Maduwe and Nagahadeniye Isubu Lebbe held one acre of field, garden and *hena*. Their service was to carry the *Mahekat* and *kat*(pingo) given to the temple of the tooth relic and to the *Diyawadana Nilame* in four festivals. They had to attend these festivals and for five days of the *Perahera*. Oil and firewood were also supplied. They had to give any assistance which *Diyawadana Nilame* or *Vidanes* asked. There was a *Horana pangawa* or trumpet tenancywhich belonged to Walagamage Adam Lebbe Mahamadu. He had to blow the trumpet or *boranewa* for three months in a year for four festivals and *Perahera*. Every other day he had to give two baskets of flowers. He had to appear before *Diyawadana Nilame* with vegetables and betel leaves (Lawrie 1896: 8-9). One Moorman, Kahata-angege KuppāTambi in Dehigama paid some money per year as a Mura tenant in *Dalada Maligawa*. Normally these duties totally belonged to traditional Sinhala Buddhists but

this evidence shows that Muslims also were devoted to these kinds of duties to protect their lands which belonged to temples.

Not only Buddhist temples but also *demals* or shrines belonging to Buddhists allocated this kind of service tenant for Muslims. Alawathugoda *devalaya* was an example. This *devalaya* was dedicated to Buddhist god Saman. One tenancy called Mutukude or the pearlumbrella had a Muslim man named Segu Mahammadu. He and his companion Gmmadage obviously Sinhalese had to hold *mutukude* or pearl umbrella at the *Perabera* and to weed the compound, to decorate the *devala* with five plantain trees with bunches and five *kumba*. In addition, they had to white wash some parts, to keep a lamp for *Kttiya mangalla* (lamps festival) and some other minor work. In addition, some Hindu Shrines like Kataragama *devalaya* in Kandy allocated Muslims for their service. Selma Lebbe and Mahammadu Lebbe in Madde Medaliya *Pattuma* (sub region) which belonged to Kinidgoda *Korale* (region) in Kegalle district were attached to some service tenure duties of Kataragama *Devalaya* in Kandy. As service tenure registry mentions they have to participate in four festivals and to appear before the *Basnayaka Nilame* (Chief of the temple) (Service Tenure Registry, Sabaragamuwa Province 1870:1060). Some other *dewalas* like Ganegoda *Devalaya* and Embekka *Devalaya* had Muslim tenants. Some Muslims in Elpitiya in Udapalatha contributed their tenancy to Ganegoda *Devalaya* by supplying salts. Muslims in Embakke supplied oil for its *Devalayas* as tenants. According to these evidences it is obvious that Muslims were able to offer their services belonged to Hindu Shrines and Buddhist temples including the *Dalada Maligama*.

Freedom for the Catholic religion in the pluralism of Kandy

In addition to these Asian religions, Catholicism was also a popular religion among a minority group in the Kandy area. Even before the Kandyan kingdom as the main kingdom, Catholic faith was welcomed by regional rulers in Kandy. The regional king Jayavira Bandara was a nominal Catholic until he was deposed and exiled by Karaliyadde Bandara. Catholic friars became a presence in the regional Kandy court. In that period, the King Karalliyadde became a devoted Catholic and publicly embraced Catholicism around 1562-1564. After that due to some internal conflicts Kandy regional king Karalliyadde Bandara (1552-1582) also abandoned the throne and escaped to the Portuguese. After engaging with the Portuguese the king and his wife died of small pox but their infant daughter Kusumasana Devi and nephew were adopted by the Portuguese in Mannar and baptized as Don Filipe and Dona Catherina respectively.

During this time, another Kandyan young noble named Konappu Bandara who was a son of aristo Virasundara Bandara engaged with Portuguese and was baptized. According to Father Queyroz he was formally baptized as Don Joao of Austria (Queyroz 1930:708.). He was able to study in Goa and seemed to be a devoted Christian. However, the situation was changed with the emergence of a rivalry to the Kandyan throne between Portuguese and him. After the Portuguese invasion in Kandy and subsequently safer some political incidents happened Konappu Bandara killed Don Filipe and became the king of Kandy in 1591. Then the king Wimaladarmasooriya I

(1591–1604) developed the kingdom as a main kingdom and transformed himself to Buddhism. According to Kitsiri Malalgoda (1976) in respect of conversions in the colonial period, one could become a Christian nominally but remains at heart a Buddhist (Malalgoda 1976: 30-33). Then the new king promoted Buddhism in the Kandyan kingdom. He brought the Tooth relic to Kandy and built a new temple for it (*Chulavamsa* 1953: 228-229). Before that, Buddhist monks in the Delwanagala Vihara in the Sabaragamuwa province protected the Tooth relic (Bell 1892: 88). It was a clear evident that the loyalty of Buddhist monks was with this new king who converted to Buddhism leaving Christianity. He supported to get the higher ordination from Burma and re-established the system of the Buddhist bhikku society. Previously mentioned king Karaliyadde's daughter Dona Catherina was viewed by the Portuguese as the rightful heir to the throne. According to Queyroz the Portuguese attempting to proclaim her as the queen and celebrate her coronation was not successful (Queyroz 1930:481-482) To protect legitimacy of the kingship he married Dona Catherina or Kusumasana Devi who was a faithful Catholic.

Moreover, the king had Portuguese renegades in his service and a few such as Manuel Dias, held high office. According to Dutch records when Joris Van Spilbergen came the king Wimaladarmasooriya showed his queen and two children to the envoy who stayed in an inner chamber of the palace. Obviously, they wore as Portuguese. According to Portuguese writings Dona Catherina's children were educated by the Franciscan friars in Kandy (Karunaratna 1999:25).

The Dutch writer Baldaeus also pointed out that until her death the queen Dona Catherina was a believing Catholic. The king allowed her to believe her faith in the palace and to maintain a small chapel. According to Baldaeus, in her death bed she made a notable discussion with another prince named Migonne (Negambo) Kumaraya who was obviously Catholic. According to that discussion the queen also had practiced some petty rituals relating to the little tradition in the kingdom. She regretted that. It is obviously a contrasting fact that Dona Catherina visited no pagodas which is mentioned in the Dutch records (Ferguson 1998: 44).

Protecting her sorrow at having resorted to heathen idols and made offerings to the devil whilst as a Christian she said she ought to have known better, and that it was no wonder then if those evil spirits are now awaiting to hurry away. The prince of Migonne reasoned with her and said, "Your majesty, please understand that all the devils in hell can have no power over a believing and patient Christian, therefore clam and pray to God in the name of Jesus to have mercy on your soul." "Yes" She replied. "I'm a Christian and will pray but you also intercede for me." (Baldaeus 1960 : 67)

During the Dutch era, Catholic faith and Kandyan kingdom collaborated together. The Dutch era was a remarkable era for Catholics who were mostly welcomed by Kandyan kings. The Dutch feared that Ceylon Catholics might not be loyal to them and might want the Portuguese back. Religion was a strong link between the Catholics and the Portuguese, The Dutch therefore took measures to stamp out Catholicism from the country. The Catholic faith was proscribed. Catholic churches and schools were confiscated. All Catholic priests were

banished from the country (Don Peter, 2005: 1). According to Knox Kandy kings and citizens showed an incomparable religious tolerance and respect for Catholicism. However, according to the doubtful emphasizes of him sometimes natives undervalued Buddhism and Hinduism and admired Christianity.

"And God's name be magnified, that has not suffered him to disturb or molest the Christians in the least in their religion, or ever attempt to force them to comply with the country's idolatry. But on the contrary, both king and people do generally like the Christian religion better than their own: and respect and honour the Christians as 'Christians'; and do believe there is a greater God than any they adore." (Knox 1989: 243)

From Kandy, catholic priests slipped in to the Maritime Provinces. They administrated the sacraments to the faithful and organizing Catholics in the Dutch areas (Malalgoda 1976: 35). During the period that Dutch pressurised them and when there was no help from anywhere for Sri Lankan Catholics, Father Joseph Vaz came to Sri Lanka from Goa. During the Wimaladarmasooriya II reign, he was able to come to Kandy in 1692. However, Fr. Vaz was imprisoned suspecting him as a spy of the Portuguese. This year there was a severe drought and the danger of famine. Many traditional rituals were preformed but they were failed to get rain. Some Catholics in royal court suggested to the king to request Fr. Vaz to pray to his god. He accepted it and according to Catholic sources in the Biblioteca de Ajuda in Lisbon, a miracle happened (Don Peter, 2005: 5). Then the king and lay Buddhist people admired Fr. Vaz as an ascetic person. That was helpful to spread Catholicism among Kandyans in this era.

According to Harvard, in 1823 there was a Sinhalese Testament in Wahakotte written by a Portuguese padre Jacome Gonsalves (Harvard 1823 :331). Then Farther Jacome Gonsalves came to Kandy from Jaffna. He studied both Tamil and Sinhala languages in Sri Lanka and wrote many religious manuscripts. He wrote on a variety of themes pertaining to Catholic faith and practice. Then he produced almost a small library of Catholic literature for the need of the time, he got copies of his books made for distribution among the people. Some king's officials like Pedro de Gaskon and few Buddhist priests helped him to develop these language skills and to understand the condition of native society. Gaskon was born to a Portuguese father and a French mother (Seneviratna 1983: 31). As a Christian, he had a generous place in the king Narendrasingha's court. Fr. Jacome Gonsalves was welcomed by the king and let him to study and make relationship with other nobles. (Perera 1942: 117-118)

According to these facts, the king Narendrasinha welcomed Catholic priests however there are another historical evidence which lead to think that Narandrasingha did not promote Christian religion in his kingdom. The principal Roman Catholic Church was built in Bogambara which is in the citadel of Kandy and there was a famous image in there. King Kundasale or King Narendrasinha would not allow this religion to be exercised and the church was destroyed. He had also ordered Padres to quit it. His successor King Keerthi Sri continued persuasion. But afterwards because of a famine and plague which afflicted the country, he ordered the images

which had adorned the church of Bogambara to be destroyed and on its destruction, been deposited in his stores, to be given to the people of Vahakotte. And king permitted to rebuild their church and enjoy their religion (Lawrie 1896: 894-895).

Sometimes the other Nayakkar kings also decided to reject Catholic faith from the kingdom. The king Sri Vijaya Rajasinha (1739-1747) had no choice but to order the persists out of his kingdom to placate the Buddhists. Moreover, with the pressure of the aristocracy the king ordered to destroy a Catholic church in Bolawatta near Chilaw. There would have been a rationale of the kings contradictory actions about religious tolerance. Sometimes they had inner pressure from nobles or general public to act as a protector of only Buddhism. Kitsiri Malalgoda assumes that by being kings of foreign origin they feel somewhat insecurity among Kandyan Buddhists and acted like rather faithful to the main religion (Malalgoda 1976: 35).

Conclusion

With this discussion, it is obvious that most of the time both Sinhalese and Nayakkar kings ruled with encouraging ethnic harmony in the Kandyan kingdom. They promoted Buddhism as a main religion and tried to establish the mechanism of Buddhist and Hindu temple land tenure system. Sometimes they acted as protectors of other minor religious traditions and gave equal benefactions. Those encouragements were helpful to the religious communities like Catholics to continue their faith in a more secure way in the kingdom. The personal religious belief of the king and his royal family did not affect religious tolerance and ethnic harmony of the country. This was also a normal practice among nobles and peasants. Rural tenants who belonged to Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam contributed their service for the wellbeing of the Buddhist monasteries and Hindu shrines. This social structure and religious behaviours practically maintained the notion of the unity in diversity in the Kandyan kingdom. Therefore, it can be argued that as a plural society, Sri Lanka always maintains diversity in multifaceted religious customs and cultural activities in relation to few different religious communities. Religious pluralism is broadly accepted with religious tolerance and by various institutions. Therefore, religious pluralism can be simply identified as a response to the diversity of religious beliefs, practices, and traditions that exist both in the contemporary society and throughout the history. All ethnicities and religious groups in Sri Lanka have historically developed a respectful dialogue and mutual understanding with other religious traditions to uplift the community wellbeing in this small island. Most of religious customs and sanctuaries are inter-related to show the believers' unity in the diversity. However, after the colonialism, competitive material generosity and newly developed ethno-religious consciousness which was influenced by various governmental institutions have introduced new limits on religious pluralism in Sri Lanka. Consequently, religious pluralism has changed its face in a complex way with the deep impact of ethno-religious nationalism and identity politics.

Glossary

Badde Sanwidana - Economic mechanism in the Kandyan kingdom.

Bisogam - Villages belonged to the Queen

Chena - Dry land cultivation

Eliya Mura- A tenant with various services

Gabadagam - Villages belonged to the king

Kttiya Mangalla - The lamps festival

Kumaragam - Villages belonged to princes.

Madige Badda - The transport mechanism

Mabekat and *kat*- Pingo loads

Maligagam - Villages belonged to the Temple of Tooth Relic.

Mulutangeimura- The tenant in the kitchen

Muthbettuwa - The periodical quota or tenants of paddy lands.

Nilapangu - Tenants of service tenant system

Patavilipangu - Transport tenant

Pattuwa - A Sub region in the Kandyn old administrative divisions

Ponnam-Kandyan coin

Sittuwa- A palm leaf which was provided as court document.

Tawalama - A pack-ox

Unani - A type of medical treatment which was specific to Muslims

Vidane - A officer of DaladaMaligawa

Vihāra and *Devalagam*- Temple lands which belonged to Buddhist temples and Hindu shrines.

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