2

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS FRAGMENTATION IN PLURALISTIC SOCIETY: IMPACT OF POST –EASTER SUNDAY ATTACK IN SRI LANKA

Rohan Thimbiripola
Former Teacher Trainer, Department of Education, Southern Province, Sri Lanka.

Dr. Suranjith Gunasekara
Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Sociology, University of Ruhuna. Sri Lanka.

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 bomb attack context. The study was qualitative in design with a constructivist philosophy. At the same time, the in-depth interview was the data collection technique employed to collect data from ten 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 had links with international Muslim extremists engaged in the attack in the name of Islam, which took the lives of innocent Catholics. They had been attending 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 main themes emerged: religious value anxiety, fundamentalism phobia, and a positive sense of security appeared high intensity. The religious value anxiety being the highest intense theme shows a collective memory fluctuation between religious teachings and the practical application of those in real-life situations among Sinhala Catholics in the Galle parish. 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 ethno religious divisions.

Key words: Societal Beliefs, Religious Fundamentalism, Parish, Ethno-Religious Fragmentation

INTRODUCTION

The 9/11 attack on United States in 2001 led by Osama Bin Laden made Islam and Muslims to be categorized as the main fundamentalist monotheistic religion and followers by the western world. That was because Osama Bin Laden used Islam dogmas to justify terrorist activities and later the 'Jihadist' ideology fueled this ideology and as a result Islam began to be considered as a religion associated with terrorism (Abdulla, 2007). Eventually with the Islam extremist terrorist groups like Islam State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islam fundamentalism along with terrorism crossed all the geographical boarders of the world. Sri Lanka was one such state. The demography of Sri Lanka by ethnicity is Sinhalese 74.9%, Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils 15.3%, Moors (Muslims) 9.3%, other 0.5% and by religion it is Buddhist 70.1%, Hindu 12.6%, Islam 9.7%, Roman Catholic 6.2%, Christian 1.4% and other 0.0% (Final Report Census of Population Housing, 2012). Sri Lanka was engaged in a thirty year intra state war which ended up in May 2019, with the complete military defeat of the separatist Tamil terrorists. Since then Sri Lankan nation has been on a course achieving a long lasting peace with so many peace building programmes in the North and East. People could move all over the country without any fear of being blasted off by a bomb or any terrorist attack. However the ethno-religious fragmentation which resulted due to this thirty year war has not yet completely faded away. In this backdrop a decade of peaceful situation was turned upside down on the 21 April 2019 as sporadic suicide bombs went off in two Catholic churches in the heart of Colombo, in Negambo and in a Christian church in Batticaloa. A few economic centers such as hotels too were targeted. Over 250 people sacrificed their lives including a few foreign nationals (International Crisis Group, 2019). As it appears the Christians were the main target. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), took the responsibility and Sri Lankan named Saharan Hashim had led the suicide attack and had been had links with the National Thawheed Jemaath (NTJ), a local Islamic sect (Attanayake, & Izzuddin, 2019). This was the first time in history in Sri Lanka that a Catholics and Christians were attacked by Muslims. They have been living in harmony as brothers and sisters for centuries in Sri Lanka. In the post-Cold War context the world began to experience intra state conflicts which eventually helped form international terrorism, mainly based on Islamic extremist ideologies. Gradually these extremist religious ideologies cross the geographical borders of many states in the world. With the Easter Sunday bomb attack, Sri Lanka became a victim of international terrorism. Two and half years have passed and still the Catholic Church and the victims of the attack are urging the current government to bring the culprits to the books. In this backdrop this study explores the nature of the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics of Galle parish in the post Easter Sunday Bomb attack context. The research problem is: do the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics in Galle parish in post Easter bomb attack lead to ethno religious fragmentation? The research objectives are; to find out the perception of Sinhala-Catholics of Galle Parish of their relationship with Muslims, to know how free the Sinhala-Catholics of Galle Parish in post Easter bomb context, to identify the application of religious values of Christianity by Sinhala Catholics of Galle Parish in the post Easter bomb context and to understand the collective memory of Sinhala-Catholics' in Galle Parish. The research questions, How do Sinhala Catholics interact with Muslims?, How do the Catholics feel about the security in the post Easter bomb attack?, What do the Sinhala Catholics think of majority Sinhala Buddhists in the aftermath of Easter bomb attack?, and How do the Catholics apply the major teachings of Jesus Christ to the post Easter bomb attack context?, were the base in setting the interview guide.

Definition of terms

Societal beliefs

Shared cognition among the members of a certain community on topics and issues that are special concerns of that community that are organized under different themes which help to them to take certain courses of actions in addressing certain issues collectively. The themes can be security, perception of out groups, equality in the society etc. (Bar-Tal, 2007).

Religious fundamentalism

It is a broad religio-political ideology that can be found in any religion. This is mostly associated with religious extremism and has been practiced through religious terrorism. In the contemporary world the Islam has a strongly adapted this ideology and being practiced it with Islamic extremism. The outcome of religious fundamentalism is that harmless religious ideologies which always speak of humanity has been turned into reality of religiously propagated destructive, harmful practices such leading to terrorism(Pelikan, 2003).

Parish

This is the smallest administrative unit in the Catholic Church administrative structure that is comprised of certain number of Catholic families. This administrative body is comprised of one or two priests, and a council called parish council which is a body of laymen appointed through an election who take decisions on religious matters of the parish on behalf of the parishioners in the parish.

Ethno-religious Fragmentation

When there is an ethno-religious fragmentation in a society, the clashes between two or more ethno-religious groups are visible. In other words the in-group out group distinction is highly visible in all aspects. They can be over scarce resources, competition for jobs, power etc. These eventually can lead to high intensity ethno-religious clashes as well (Chakravarty, Fonseca, Ghosh, Kumar, Marjit, 2019)

Problem Statement

Sri Lankan society is pluralistic divided along ethno-religious lines such as Sinhala-Buddhists, Sinhala-Catholics, Tamil-Catholics, Tamil- Hindus and Muslims. But this division doesn't lead to ethno religious fragmentation as long as strong and good ethno religious relationships, mutual trust, and the feeling of no harm prevail between and among all the ethno-religious groups. These bonds can be weakened due to external interference and global religious extremism as the physical state borders are blurred due to globalization and lead to ethno-religious fragmentation which will result in ethno-religious clashes. The scale of Easter bomb attack and how it had been coordinated give us a clear picture of the advanced nature of the local Islamist terrorist networks in Sri Lanka. Conflict is a common factor in human interaction and it is inevitable. There are several types of conflicts such as interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup, intrastate, and international or interstate. There is a change in types of conflicts with the end of Cold war in 1991. The intra state conflicts have become very common which are mainly on ethno-religious issues. Sri Lanka was engaged in an ethnic conflict

between the state and Tamil terrorists who fought for a separatist state for almost thirty years until the main terrorist group the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam was military defeated in 2009 by the Sri Lankan state Security Forces. Thus the terrorism was completely wiped out from Sri Lanka. There are so many debates about the origin of Global ethno-religious terrorism in the world. One such is that the Arabs complain that Western media and other propaganda machines have attached terrorism to Islam and the Arab soil has created the religious base terrorism (Abdulla, 2007). However, the Islamic religious sentiments were embedded to terrorist activities by Osama Bin Laden, the Al-Qaida leader by instigating the 9/11 terrorist attack on the world trade twin tower in the USA in 2001(Welch, 2012). With this the global war on terrorism started and simultaneously the Islamic religious terrorist activities were intensified and began to spread over to many countries including Sri Lanka. Initially the Muslim community began to strengthen their ethnic and religious identity by introducing Hijab for women, consumption of Halal food only, building of Mosques where there is a very small number of Muslims, Starting of Madrasa schools, the change of infrastructure etc. In other words kind of Arabisization in Muslim dominated areas such as Batticaloa and in other areas as well could be. This created an Islamic phobia discourse among the majority Sinhalese. At the same time the radicalization of Islam began to work out in the country with the penetration of Wahhabism, which originated around 16th century in Saudi Arabia as a radical strict Islamic religious fundamentalist sect, and eventually became the ideology of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida , Taliban, Boko Horam, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and so on. Hence Wahabism sought to unleash terrorism to suppress other Islamic sects and other religious faiths too. Thus in Sri Lanka groups of Islamic extremist groups began to follow Wahbism and resorted to terrorist activities in the Eastern area, where they attacked the other Islam sects (Ali, 2007). Sri Lankan nationals Zaharan Haseem and the group are a creation of this ideology. The Christians in Sri Lanka were at churches on 21st April 2019 attending holy masses celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the most important religious celebration for Christians in the world when the sporadic suicide bombs went off in two Catholic churches in the heart of Colombo, in Negambo and in a Christian church in Batticaloa taking lives of over 250 innocent unarmed people. This was a huge shock for the whole country irrespective of any religion, ethnicity, cast, class, or political ideology. Everybody condemned this terrorist attack. Aftermath of this attack there were so many incidents took place in return that harmed the Muslim community as well, which have created some kind of ethno-religious fragmentation in the Sri Lankan pluralist society. Now two and half years have passed and no incidents of this sort have taken place as the security of the state has been strengthened and given the priority among all.

Previous researches on Post –Easter Sunday Attack of Sri Lanka have examined the as to how the community leaders and religious institutions should take the lead role in guiding and educating their followers to help maintain the peace and harmony in Sri Lanka (Gunasingham, 2019). Another study has shown that how the disseminated Islam-phobia among non-Muslims has created distrust of Muslim community (Imitiyaz, 2019). Other researches read too have not checked the perception of Sinhala Catholics after the Easter Bomb attack. Thus there is validity for the research problem ;do the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics in Galle parish in post Easter bomb attack lead to ethno religious fragmentation?, with a purpose of exploring the nature of the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics of Galle parish in the post Easter Sunday Bomb attack context. By exploring the nature of societal beliefs of Sinhala Catholics in the Galle parish who have not directly or indirectly affected by the attack, we can get an insight of the cognitions shared by the Christian community in the parish

on the issues such as security, the relationship with out-groups, especially with the Muslim community, or equality among other communities which creates a socio-psychological dynamics on which a community reacts to certain ethno-religious issues (Bar-Tal, 2007).

All the reviewed literature pertaining to this research study have explored about the religious and ethnic influence on terrorism and have examined the causes and mainly the contribution and international links the extremist elements of Muslim community had in this attack. The Christians' perception of the post Eater bomb attack has not been covered directly. Thus this exploration of the nature of societal beliefs of Sinhala Catholics of Galle parish in the post Easter Sunday Bomb attack context has a value and can be justified. The rationale of the study is that by knowing the societal beliefs of Sinhala Catholics who have not directly faced the terror attack can give an insight of their collective memory regarding post Easter attack context and the ethos of conflict through which they will be pursuing this issue forward and to see if they would lead to a broader ethno-religious fragmentation in Sri Lankan pluralist society.

Research Problem

Do the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics in Galle parish in post Easter bomb attack lead to ethno religious fragmentation?

Research Objectives

- to find out the perception of Sinhala-Catholics of Galle Parish of their relationship with Muslims
- to know how free the Sinhala-Catholics of Galle Parish in post Easter bomb context
- to identify the application of religious values of Christianity by Sinhala Catholics of Galle Parish in the post Easter bomb context
- to understand the collective memory of Sinhala-Catholics living in Galle Parish.

Research Questions

1. How do the Sinhala Catholics interact with Muslims?
2. How do the Catholics feel about the security in the post Easter bomb attack?
3. What do the Sinhala Catholics think of majority Sinhala Buddhists in the aftermath of Easter bomb attack?
4. How do the Catholics apply the major teachings of Jesus Christ to the post Easter bomb attack context?

Limitations of the Study

This study was done on a highly sensitive topic which has validity to present day. Therefore the researcher took all the precautions not to hurt the feelings of the respondents in formulating the lead questions of the interview guide and in administering them as well. This made more difficult as the in-depth interviews had to be carried out electronically, a deviation from the traditional accepted method of doing in-depth interviews physically due to the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic. Another was that all the respondents were engaged in other activities via zoom-technology and the interview time had to be limited with some respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Amresh Gunasinghamin his research article an analysis of a research study on the topic Sri Lanka Attacks: An Analysis of the aftermath" of the Easter bomb attack in Sri Lanka has examined what factors have motivated the terrorist attack and how those can be used to infer the post-ethnic war context in Sri Lanka. He has emphasized that there should be comprehensive national security network in the country and the state should initiate more programmes to build ethnic reconciliation. Furthermore rigid and comprehensive legislative measures are to be taken to curb terrorism is suggested. According to his analysis this attack had a link to the ISIS. Moreover he adds that the attackers have claimed that they had targeted "targeted nationals of the crusader alliance [anti-IS US-led coalition] and Christians in Sri Lanka." Finally he states that the community leaders and religious institutions to take a leading role in guiding and educating their followers to help build and maintain peace and harmony in Sri Lanka, while the responsibility of the government is to strengthen the security and other social structures in the country in order to stop breeding and spreading of terror ideologies (Gunasingham, 2019).

A study done under the topic of "The Easter Sunday Bombings and the Crisis Facing Sri Lanka's Muslims" by Imtiyaz has argued on the collective Islam phobia that has been disseminated among non-Muslim communities after the Tamil ethnic conflict was militarily concluded, also the distrust about the Muslims in the country and also about the privileges given to the Muslim leaders who supported to win the war. He argues that the open economy after 1977 had made a ground for Islamic religious movements to breed in the country and that had made Muslims to be polarized. Moreover there had been socio-religious revivals among Muslim community to strengthen their ethnic identity. However these revivals had not been used in the peace building process in the country. This shows that Muslim community has no intention to contribute their religious and cultural values for peace building. They have been trying to be isolated from the other communities. He further recommends that the Muslim representatives should show a "genuine and responsible" role in national affairs in the country. Further, he adds that ethno-religiously polarized nations are targeted for recruiting members for Islamic extremist groups by transnational Islamic groups such as IS and on this basis to stop polarization he recommends Muslim politicians to be refrain from using religious symbols in political campaigns. Finally the study says that though the non-Islamic communities Islam phobic, the state is not Islam phobic (Imtiyaz, 2019).

A research done on the topic "Islamism and Muslim minority in Sri Lanka" by Suresh Noel Fernando, has looked into the question how and why is "Islamism growing among the Muslims minority population of Sri Lanka?" under two hypothesizes. One is: Muslim minority population in Sri Lanka is mobilizing around Islamism in reaction to growing Buddhist Nationalism and the second is: the Muslim minority population in Sri Lanka is mobilizing around Islamism as a result of external actors promoting religious extremism. He argues that foreign elements have shaped the fragmented Muslim community by using foreign Islamic cultural and religious practices. And as a result of that the mobilization of Muslims has become easy, he argues. Consequently, these have helped divide communities along religion and have paved way for extremist religious ideologies to penetrate into the Muslim community. Finally these issues immensely contribute to widen the ethno-religious fragmentation which eventually destabilize the political structure and retard the much needed development and the security of the country. Therefore he suggests the steps that should be taken

to control the "Islamization" that taking place in the country and to rectify the factors that encourage religious and ethnic disharmony (Fernando, 2018).

The research done by Joshua Wright (2016), on the topic "Why is Contemporary Religious Terrorism Predominantly Linked to Islam? has explored four Possible Psychosocial Factors" such as (i) the fundamentalist nature of Islam, (ii) religious involvement that forms coalitional commitment, (iii) religious commitment that results in increased perceptions of threat from secularization, and (iv) the homogenization of Islam compared to other religious groups why religious terrorism is predominantly Islamic. This had been a quantitative study where the sample had been comprised of 167Christians and 198 Muslims students from a Canadian University. In that study the score of Muslim students have been significantly higher on religious fundamentalism than the Christian students' score which is M=50.04, SD=19.44 for Muslim students and M=43.70, SD=16.93, with t (363) =3.29,p=.001.This has been supported by with the findings of another study conducted by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) on religious fundamentalism using multiple religious groups namely, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Jews which says that Muslims have scored significantly a higher score than the other groups. The results of the analysis is; Muslims (M = 112.3, SD = 40.3), Christians (M = 85.0, SD = 33.0), Hindus (M = 84.5, SD = 31.5) and Jews (M = 48.3, SD = 21.1). This empirical data suggest that Muslims give a more fundamentalist interpretation to their religious doctrines compared to other religions under study. Finally he argues that the homogenization of Islamic religious beliefs makes more intergroup distinction thus creating socio-psychological process of inter religious group conflicts and this has been intensified by adding Jihadist ideologies into the Islamic narratives (Wright, 2016).

Finally a qualitative research through interpretative approach done by Sara Silvestri and James Mayall (2015) on the topic "The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peace Building" is seeking to examine and analyze the relationship between the religious faiths and conflict. For this they have used three case studies from three conflicts that have some kind of a religious element. They are in Israel-Palestine, Mali and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The objective of the research was not to find a distinctive answer to say that religion is a cause of conflict. Instead to find as to how intellectual tools can be used in the multi-faceted concept of religion in the context of conflict and peace building. In this study they have been very causes to exaggerate that religion as a cause of violence. Critical review of existing literature and the materials from Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been used to collect data. In the analysis main aim has been to find out different approaches that have been used in the study of relationship between religion and conflict and peace building and the practice of dealing with these issues. The findings are; religion matters in both preventing and resolving conflicts, in making and building peace, and also that a religion is a context-dependent which is culturally loaded, changes the meanings of the sacred scriptures, rituals, and the group identity accordingly. The recommendations given in the study are; to take religion as a system of interconnected variable that changes according to the specific situations, historical trajectories and external factors; the hegemonic secular and Western presuppositions and philosophies still influence the religions; not to overestimate the role of religion in peace building and conflict resolution excluding other institutions and dynamics (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study explored the nature of the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics of Galle parish in the post Easter Sunday Bomb attack context with a constructivist epistemology, the philosophical view the study that was guided by. This research study was mostly based on the respondents' views regarding a situation or a phenomenon under study. Furthermore the questions asked are open ended and the respondents can add meaning to those through interaction with others either in-group or out-group (Creswell, 2009).Qualitative research design is the best research design to study when the variables of the research problem is not known and need to explore (Creswell, 2012). The central issue or the purpose of this study was the nature of the social beliefs of Sinhala Catholics of Galle parish in the post Easter Sunday Bomb attack context. The qualitative research design was employed and the in-depth interview, a qualitative data collecting technique was employed to collect primary data from the respondents. The sample number is not pre-decided in a qualitative research as the data saturation point decides the sample. In this study only ten respondents were interviewed. All these respondents were selected through judgmental or purposive sampling technique in non-probability sampling method. The reason was that the researcher had an understanding of the respondents that a quality data could be obtained for the research questions. An interview guide with ten questions was used to collect primary data. It was best if the researcher could interview the respondents physically, but due to the prevailing global Covid-19 pandemic with the health restrictions the researcher had to use zoom technology to interview the respondents. All the interviews were recorded with the prior verbal consent of the respondents. The inductive approach of thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data. Only one agreed respondent had a trouble with her electronic device in connecting via zoom. Thus with her agreement the researcher cancelled the interview and selected another respondent. The study area was the Galle parish. The study population is depicted in table 01.The demographic information of the ten respondents is depicted in table 02.

Table 1

Study Population

Respondent	No.
Priests	02
Nuns	12
Layman (Male & Female)	1200 (450 families)

Note. Taken from Galle Parish Records

Table 2

Demographic details of the ten respondents interviewed

Respondent	Sex	Age category	Civil Status	Highest Educational qualification	Profession	Interview Time in minutes
01	male	42-47	married	First Degree	Re-Settlement Officer	44
02	male	54-60	unmarried	G.C.E.(O/L)	Media writer	50

03	female	54-60	married	G.C.E.(A/L)	Teacher-Private School	39
04	female	48-53	married	First Degree	Senior Manager-Team leader	30
05	male	24-29	unmarried	Post Graduate Diploma-SLIM	Assistant Manager	37
06	male	48-53	married	7th Grade	Mason	20
07	male	42-47	married	G.C.E.(A/L)	Technical Officer	31
08	male	30-35	unmarried	Diploma in Philosophy and Theology	Rev. Priest	35
09	male	42-47	unmarried	Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Philosophy	Rev. Priest	35
10	female	30-35	married	G.C.E.(O/L)	housewife	22
					Total minutes	343

DATA ANALYSIS

There were 343 minutes interview transcripts. Nine interviews were done in Sinhala and one in English languages. The Sinhala transcripts were then translated to English language by the researcher himself. Then the interviews were coded by applying "splitter" method with In Vivo, Descriptive and Values coding systems (Saldana, 2013). Total codes generated from 10 interviews were 216.Through inductive approach of thematic analysis the codes were categorized under nine topics and finally five (05) themes generated. The categories, the themes and the theme intensity from highest to lowest intensity are depicted in table 03.

Table 3

Generated Categories and Themes

| Categories	Code frequency	Themes Generated	Theme intensity as per code frequency
Religious Tolerance	57		
Deviation from Religion	22	Religious value anxiety	136
Muslim Brotherhood	57		
Religious fragmentation	04		
Islamic Fundamentalism	22	Fundamentalism Phobia	31
Politico-Religious Fundamentalism	05		
State-ethno-religious protection	30	Positive sense of security	30
Group insecurity	10	Religious gathering anxiety	10
Social recognition	09	Sense of consolation	09

Thematic Analysis

Religious value anxiety

Christianity is one of the oldest religions in the world. Catholicism is a Christian way of living and a religion for all walks of life irrespective of class, creed, status, wealth, power, ignorance, education etc. It cures and gives consolation for all the sins in the world. Catholics follow Jesus Christ and believe Jesus is the redeemer and the way to God. The commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ is the main objective of Catholicism. The main element that Catholics differ to other Christian communities is the acceptance of the authority of the Pope. Thus the Catholics are governed by the institutional principles and the teachings of Jesus Christ (Mcbrien, 1994). The Catholics in post Easter bomb attack agree to the very teaching of Jesus Christ, the 'Forgive and forget' concept. But the majority is not willing to apply that to this context as it would do an injustice to the victims of the attack. However, they all have no hatred or anger with the Muslim community. They still have the brotherhood as it was. One respondent said: "now, the forgive and forget concept applies with the people who faced the attack" (Respondent 01) another said that: "here no way that Easter attack should be pardoned, as a Christian in no way that it should be forgotten, if we pardon at this point it means that we have not done our duty to the victims of the attack." The very same respondent expresses the acceptance and brotherhood of the Muslims: "can work hundred percent freely, the conduct and the behavior of Muslims as we see, we can work with them on humanity, they are not speaking of extremism."(Respondent 02) .Another respondent said: "can't, really can't, personally the forgive and forget concept doesn't suit to current society, if we do that we do an injustice to the victims of Easter attack, it is difficult to give pardon." While saying like that the same respondent said: "we are in a multi religious environment, we should have a relationship with those I feel, I associate a lot of Muslims, those relationships are still there" (Respondent03). This shows that there is a contest between practicing of Catholic values what Jesus preached and the human nature in the secular world.

Another responded added: "this is how, I accept any religion, no religion gives a wrong thing to the society, I don't say that only the catholic religion is correct, every religion directs people to a good path, I accept every religion with love"(Respondent 08). Which again shows that the acceptance and importance of religions to mankind. The same respondent said: "the pardoning should be done with the lost lives, if the reason is found pardon and forgetting can be done easily" (Respondent 08).Thus, the post Easter bomb attack context has created a fluctuation between the Catholic religious values what Jesus taught and the human collective position bargaining which has resulted a religious value anxiety among the catholic respondents in the Galle parish (figure 01).

Figure 01
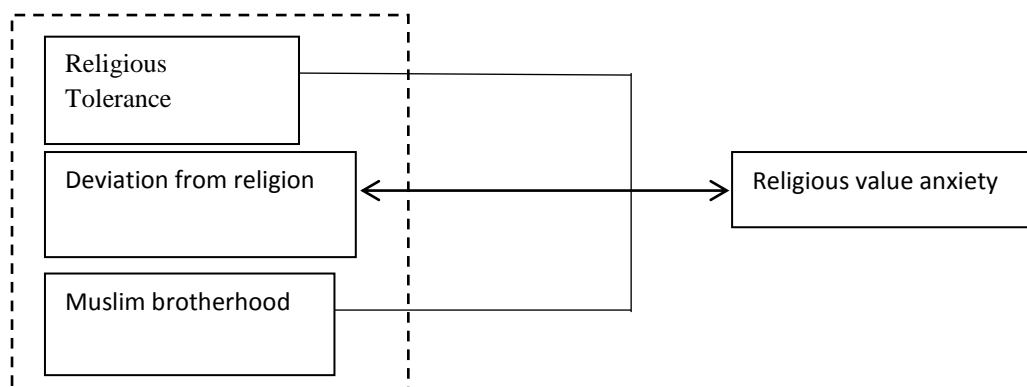
Positive sense of security

The state security and the feeling and experiencing the protection of the majority ethno-religious community builds a sense of security among the minority religious communities in a threaten context. The post Ester bomb attack context is such a context the Catholic and the Christian communities in Sri Lanka have been experiencing. One respondent said: "those people protected and looked after us" (Respondent 02). This shows the sense of protection the Catholics have from the majority Sinhala Buddhists. To support this, another response was: "to be true, there felt a big pride of a nation, they stood by us, especially the Buddhist priests, they spoke for us" (Respondent 03). At the same time they believe in state security as well. One respondent said: "no fear or suspicion when interacting in the society, At that time it was there now no, I don't think there will be anything like that in the future"(Respondent 05).Another added: "we go to church thinking that there is no danger in there, the authorities should stop anyone who tries do harm to worshippers"(Respondent 07).

All these responses indicate that now they have no fear in the society of any threat. One said: "the insecurity is bit removed as security forces are there"(Respondent 01).

Fundamentalism phobia

Fundamentalism is understood as a situation when political elements are overarching the religious moral values in any religion in the world. By and large in the contemporary world almost all the religions have become a victim of fundamentalism. This leads to religious extremism and finally to religious terrorism (Pratt , 2006). One respondent said: "there is religious extremism in the world, as examples ISIS and Bokoharam can be taken. I think even in Christianity too there are sects; I cannot exactly say if there is extremism in Buddhism, when we speak of extremism in the world the finger points at Islam mainly, we have seen conflicts between Islamic religious groups"(Respondent 01). It is evident with the Easter attack in Sri Lanka and what is now happening in the world today. However contrast ideas too prevail as another respondent said: "I don't believe in religious extremism, if it has given to a group it is political, No religious preachers have given religious extremism"(Respondent 02). But another respondent said: "we go to church thinking that there is no danger in there, the authorities should stop anyone who tries do harm to worshippers"(Respondent 07). Thus it shows that some kind of fundamentalist phobia is there among the respondents.

Religious gathering anxiety

Catholics have an anxiety when having collective practices such as gathering for a mass, a religious possession, etc. outside the church. One respondent said:" now we feel unsecured when we gather for holy mass or other community work"(Respondent 01). At the same time positive feeling too has been expressed as one respondent said : "but now we have come out of backwardness we used to be in, Catholics are insecure"(Respondent 02).This indicates that there is an anxiety of fear when they gather as a group.

Sense of consolation

This theme has a very low intensity. One respondent said : "but now we have come out of backwardness"(Respondent 02). This is some kind awaking from reserved status the Catholics had been practicing. Another said: "I think after this Easter attack the Catholic church became bit

popular in Sri Lanka, because many got a clear picture of the Catholic church, how the church worked"(Respondent 08). And another added: "yeah…we are living in the deep South of Sri Lanka where Catholicism is much unseen, people do not know ….couldn't recognize catholic priest even, when there is a nun going in thickly Buddhist area then they do not know how to address even…for a nun or a priest, but with the bomb attack the positive side of it in that everybody came to know the catholic church and its character… so when we went to market place, when we take public transportation , the respect loyalty and the concern general public showed with a remarkable way"(Respondent 09). All these responses depict that some Catholics in the parish see a few unexpected positive awareness of the church among the general public.

When considering the emerged themes, the Religious value anxiety and the Positive sense of security has a very high intensity while the Fundamentalism phobia and the Religious gathering anxiety have a low intensity, and the Sense of consolation has a very low intensity. The themes the Religious gathering anxiety and the Fundamentalism phobia support a suggestion made in the study done by Amresh Gunasingham (2019), that there should be comprehensive national security network in the country.

Sara Silvestri and James Mayall (2015) in their research have discussed the role of a religion in conflict and peace building. The theme Religious value anxiety emerged from this study doesn't fully support the idea. As suggested in Suresh Noel Fernando (2018) in his study, the He argues that foreign elements have shaped the fragmented Muslim community by using foreign Islamic cultural and religious practices. And as result of that the mobilization of Muslims has become easy, he argues. Consequently, these have helped divide communities along religion and have paved way for extremist religious ideologies to penetrate into the Muslim community. The themes emerged do not infer that fundamentalist Islamic values have caused any division between the Catholics and Muslims. Not even the Fundamentalism phobia theme supports it.

DISCUSSION

The Catholics in Galle parish live a pluralist society where Sinhala-Buddhists are predominating. Thus it is obvious that Catholics in Galle parish are nourished by Sinhala-Buddhist culture. The five themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews done with ten respondents show the nature of societal beliefs of Sinhala Catholics in the Galle parish. The theme Religious value anxiety has the highest intensity. The Catholics mainly follow Jesus Christ and his teachings. Jesus Christ set an example how one should pardon the enemy by forgiving the people who crucified him on the cross. The nature of relationship of Sinhala Catholics with the Muslims is very high. It has scored the highest code frequency equally with the religious tolerance. However, the respondents do have a problem of forgiving and forgetting which clashes with the Muslim brotherhood. The denial of forgive and forget concept is something that pulls Catholics from their religious sentiments and might get lost in position bargaining. This helps understand the objective of the study: to identify the application of religious values of Christianity by Sinhala Catholics of Galle Parish in the post Easter bomb context. However this egoistic belief has been overshadowed by the high intensity Muslim brotherhood and the religious tolerance. This addresses the objective that was intended to achieve: to find out the perception of Sinhala-Catholics of Galle Parish of their relationship with Muslims.

The Sinhala Catholics have a low intensity phobia of fundamentalism due to the international connection that had with the attack. And at the same time they believe Islamic religious fundamentalism has misled a group of Muslim youth to do this attack. Though they have this phobia they reiterated that they have no fear in the society which indicates that there is no ethno-religious fragmentation between two ethno-religious groups; Sinhala-Catholics and Muslims at present. This is clearly visible with the very high code frequency of Muslim brotherhood further strengthen by the Positive sense of security theme. This positive sense of security is due the strong support and religious bond with the majority Sinhala Buddhist community in the country. In addition to that the state security provided by the government of Sri Lanka too has helped Catholics to be free from fear of any attacks. The very low intensity theme, religious gathering anxiety has been mitigated with the security provided to the places of Catholic worships. They accept and appreciate the security as it removes the fear of any attack. These two themes; positive sense of security and religious gathering anxiety have been able to address another objective: to know how free the Sinhala-Catholics of Galle Parish in post Easter bomb context.

A very low intensity theme, sense of consolation emerged. This is due to a very few ideas regarding the unexpected positive awareness of the church, the priests and the nuns to the society in the post Easter attack context. It is a good sign to understand the openness of Buddhist and Muslim brotherhood towards Christians.

Finally the two themes, positive sense of security and sense of consolation together remove the effects of the themes fundamentalism phobia and religious gathering anxiety. Thus the theme religious value anxiety remains as the collective memory among the Sinhala Catholics in the Galle parish which addresses the objective; to understand the collective memory of Sinhala-Catholics' living in Galle Parish.

CONCLUSION

The emerged thematic clusters based on the social beliefs of Sinhala-Catholics in the Galle parish are pertaining to their religion and secular world, a view of an out-group, and regarding the security will give an insight of if the socio-psychological dynamics of Sinhala Catholics in Galle parish would lead to ethno-religious fragmentation in the post Easter bomb attack context. It is clear that when look at the emerged thematic clusters of the nature of social beliefs of Catholics in the Galle parish in the post Easter bomb attack do not show any ethno-religious fragmentation from Catholics' perspective. However, an emerged theme, the religious value anxiety suggests that the threshold of any ethno-religious fragmentation of Catholics to be considered as there is a conflict between Catholic religious values and secular ideologies. The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the societal beliefs of Sinhala Catholics of Galle parish in the post Easter Sunday bomb attack context. The perception of the Sinhala Catholics regarding the relationship with Muslim community and the sense of security in the post Easter bomb attack context is very healthy and positive.

Finally, according to the themes generated from the study there is no apparent ethno-religious fragmentation between Sinhala-Catholics and Muslims from the Sinhala-Catholics' perspective in the Galle parish as far as the out-group relationship and the sense of security are concerned. This study will help understand the collective memory of Sinhala Catholics who are living in a Sinhala Buddhist context and to further strengthen the ethno-religious relationships to stop any kind of ethno-religious fragmentation in the future.

REFERENCES

Abdulla, R., A. (2007), Islam, Jihad, and Terrorism in Post-9/11 Arabic Discussion Boards, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication , doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00363.x, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiJjKq26MPyAhWMXSsKHSNHDCoQFnoECAUQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Facademic.oup.com%2Fjcmc%2Farticlepdf%2F12%2F3%2F1063%2F22316885%2Fjjcmcom1063.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0KpPLXKL4MozX9CAnZ73Eu. Retrieved 22 August 2021

Ali, A. (2017), Wahhaby Threat to Traditional Cultures in the Sunni- Muslim World: A Neglected Theme in Cultural Globalization, INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, Feb2017-9.pdf (irhsr.org) . Retrieved 22 August 2021

Attanayake C., Izzuddin M. (2019), Lessons from the Sri Lankan Easter Sunday Tragedy, ISAS Insights No. 568, Lessons from the Sri Lankan Easter Sunday Tragedy, https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/isas-insight-lessons-from-sl-easter-sunday-tragedy.pdf. Retrieved 31st May 2021

Bar-Tal, D. (2007), Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts, Sage Publications, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242734526_Sociopsychological_Foundations_of_Intractable_Conflicts. Retrieved 22 August 2021

Chakravarty,S.,Fonseca,M.,A.,Ghosh,S.,Kumar,P., Marjit,S.(2019), Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics 82 (2019) 101451 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221480431830421X, Retrieved 27 August 2021.

Creswell J.,W. (2009), Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approache (3rd ed), United States of America, SAGE publications.

Creswell J., W. (2012), Educational Research, Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research, Fourth Edition, Pearson, http://lcwu.edu.pk/ocd/cfiles/TESOL/MS-TSL-505/EducationalResearchPlanningConductingandEvaluatingQuantitativeandQualitativeResearch.pdf. Retrieved 22.08.2021

Fernando, P.,S.,N.(2018), ISLAMISM AND MUSLIM MINORITY IN SRI LANKA, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1069564.pdf. Retrieved 22 August 2021

Final Report Census of Population Housing, (2012),Department of Census and Statistics, http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Population/StaticalInformation/CPH2011/CensusPopulationHousing2012-FinalReport, Retrieved 02 October 2021

Gunasingham, A. (2019), Sri Lanka Attacks: An Analysis of the Aftermath, 11(6),8-13 , International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26662255.pdf. Retrieved 31st May 2021

International Crisis Group (2019), After Sri Lanka's Easter Bombings: Reducing Risks of Future Violence, Asia Report No. 302,

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep31420.5.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A13a5fb7868f8ec a309fb759dc83eef82. Retrieved 21.08.2021

Mcbrien, R. (1994),Catholicism :Introduction, HarperCollins Publishers, https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/mission/pdf1/c3.pdf. Retrieved 27 August 2021

Pelikan, H., R. (2003), Fundamentalism Extreme Tendencies in modern Christianity, Islam and Judaism, https://www.bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/ms_8_1.pdf. Retrieved 7th September 2021

Pratt,D. (2006), Religious Fundamentalism: A Paradigm for Terrorism,Australian Religion Studies Review, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/250014440_Religious_Fundamentalism_A_Parad igm_for_Terrorism/link/591f183c0f7e9bd09ea35839/download. Retrieved 27 August2021

Saldana, J. (2013), The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, Second Edition, SAGE Publication, https://emotrab.ufba.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Saldana-2013-TheCodingManualforQualitativeResearchers.pdf. Retrieved 25 August 2021

Silvestri, S. and Mayall, J. (2015),THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACE BUILDING, Role-of-religion-in-conflict-peacebuilding_0_0.pdf (thebritishacademy.ac.uk). Retrieved 24 August 2021

The Easter Sunday Bombings and the Crisis Facing Sri Lanka's Muslims,(n.d.)https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0021909619868244. Retrieved 1st June2021

Welch,J.,P. (2012), Religion and Terrorism; Killing for God and country, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271764896_Religion_and_Terrorism_Killing_for_ God_and_country. Retrieved 22 August 2021

Wright,J.,D. (2016), Why is Contemporary Religious Terrorism Predominantly Linked to Islam? Four Possible Psychosocial Factors, 10 (1), 19-31, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26297516.pdf. Retrieved 23 August 2021