

Can Craft Consciousness Disband Ethnic Consciousness? Case-study on Organic Reconciliation Process of Traditional Handicraft Makers from Batticaloa District

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Any form of armed conflict creates a cleavage in the social, political and economic spheres of people in a given society. In the post-war Sri Lanka, the SLFP and present governments have employed numerous developmental programs as one of the reconciliation mechanisms; yet, these measures proved to be less successful than expected. Through this article, we are bringing the evidence of an organic reconciliation process that has already existed among Muslims and Tamils of Batticaloa, in the form of handicraft making such as handloom weaving and pottery making. We are forwarding the argument that higher success rate can be observed by penetrating into the cultural heritages of ethnographic practices of locals for decades and encouraging these practices to be resurfaced for a non-intrusive organic reconciliation process compared to the introduction of novel developmental programs. We have spent three months with two weeks at regular intervals collecting data from two separate camps of handloom weavers and pottery makers from the areas. The main research method is video-ethnography and within which interview technique is used to gather the samples' thoughts. The sample consists of 10 Muslims and 12 Tamils from the weaving centre and 6 Muslims and 15 Tamils from the pottery makers' side. The sample consists of both males and females. Our research proved that common economic hardships encourage the locals to rediscover their traditional roots which are both positively received and practiced by locals rather than outside developmental programs. In, conclusion, in Sri Lanka's Batticaloa district's local craft consciousness proved to be a powerful tool in bringing individuals together; and through social elevation of status has a direct contribution to country's societal and human well-being as well.

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