

Challenges of Engaging Religious Leaders in Peacebuilding After the Easter Bomb Blasting in Sri Lanka: A Sociological Study Based in Mannar District

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Religion is a major social institution for social change globally. Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1912) says that religion is a set of beliefs and practices about something sacred. In that way, religion plays an important role in building peace. In a pluralistic society, the role of religious leaders is vital in building inter-ethnic harmony and successfully resolving violence. In Sri Lanka, which has a multi-ethnic social background, religious ideology plays an important role in creating harmony between races. In recent times, religious fundamentalism between ethnic groups in Sri Lanka has fueled ethnic conflicts. Due to the ethnic and religious divisions of the people, there has been a delay in building sustainable peace. Religion has sometimes caused unrest in the society through anti-social activities. Restlessness is life, possession. It has psychological and social implications. Unexpectedly, the 2019 Easter Day suicide bomb attacks on major Christian churches in Sri Lanka challenged Sri Lanka's inter-ethnic peace and harmony and became the basis for religious separatism. Biased behaviour by religious leaders to encourage this has been observed in the past. This study was carried out as a qualitative study. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews as a research tool. Data were collected through secondary data collection tools such as research articles, magazines, books etc. and the islands were subjected to thematic analysis and the results of the study were obtained. After the Easter attack, there is a need to build a strong society through reconciliation and peace between the races, so all religious leaders should cross the differences and build peace between the national races with tolerance. Religious reconciliation is seen as a means to sustainable peace.. The study explores the challenges in the role of religious leaders in building inter-ethnic peace after the Easter bombings.

Keywords: Easter attack, peacebuilding, reconciliation, religious leaders, religious separatism