A Study of Victims' Perceptions on Post War Reconciliation Efforts by the Government of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Reconciliation is a difficult process that can help conflicting parties restore their relationships. "Effective reconciliation is the best guarantee that the violence of the past will not return." The end of the conflict raises tremendous expectations for peace and reconciliation among the Sri Lankan people and the world community. There are several research studies on war and post - war conditions in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan war has produced a diverse range of war victims. With the military victory over the separatist Tamil movement to win a homeland for them, the Sri Lankan Government has begun a process of reconciliation through a package that emphasises infrastructure development while attempting to enforce its memorialization project and deny the right of memory for Tamil minorities, including Tamils from the North and East of Sri Lanka. The Eastern Part's development package, known as "Negenahira Udanaya" (Reawaking East), has placed an overemphasis on infrastructure development while ignoring how people perceive those efforts and failing to appreciate the significance of memory in forming perception. This ethnographic research aims to understand how perception influences reconciliation and what critical issues must be addressed in an effective reconciliation process. The study was done in Karadiyanaru area in Batticaloa district in Sri Lanka using the interview method. The collected data was analysed thematically. The study concludes that unless the memory and perception components of the reconciliation process are addressed, true reconciliation will remain a fantasy for Southern politicians.

Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), reconciliation is 'the action of reconciling persons, or the effect of this; the fact of having reconciled' (David Tombs). Seeking accuracy about the past is an important stage in the reconciliation process. Truth and justice are not separate from reconciliation; they are essential components of it. (Bloomfield & Barnes, 2003). As per John Paul Lederach, reconciliation consists of both "a focus and a locus". The goal of reconciliation is to create new and better connections between former opponents (Calic, 2009). Lederach believes that relationships are both the primary cause and long-term solution to conflict (Lederach, 2001). Promoting justice and reconciliation are key components of post-conflict peacebuilding. Respect for a conflict's distinctive historical and cultural context, as well as a domestic reconciliation process, is crucial. Reconciliation is now widely seen as an important aspect of conflict prevention. For example, the Rwandan conflict is commonly described as ethnic, yet the Hutu majority's grievances were based on socioeconomic inferiority, and the primary targets of the genocide (at least initially) were political opponents of the ruling government. The Rwandan government sees legal accountability as a vital aspect of the reconciliation process: "there can be no reconciliation without justice" (Lambourne, 2004).

It has been found that violent conflict tends to create all sorts of victims: death and torture, those bereaved and maimed, attacked and raped, hurt in battle and by mines, abduction and detention, prohibition and homelessness, intimidation and humiliation (Amnesty International, 2018). The Sri Lankan ethnic war is no exception. Following the military victory over the Separatist Tamil Militant Movement in 2009, the Sri Lankan government began a process of reconstruction and reconciliation in war-torn districts. People who have experienced violence in Tamil majority areas of the country , combined with the geopolitical realities of South Asia, has led Tamil political elite to realise that focusing on finding a political settlement within the framework of a united country with cultural autonomy is preferable to a separate state. However, it appears that scholars studying ethnic conflict and reconciliation have not thoroughly investigated the effects of war victims' perceptions on the reconciliation process. The primary focus of this research was to better understand the effects of war victims' perceptions of Sri Lankan government activity. The problem of the study was how victim perceptions pave the way for reconciliation in post-conflict societies, and the research question was what victim's perceptions were about various sorts of reconciliation efforts done by the Sri Lankan government. The paper has two objectives. The primary purpose was academic, and the second was practical. Its academic objective is to overcome the absence of attention for war victims' perceptions in reconciliation literature. To achieve this goal, an attempt was made to know perceptions were about government efforts of various types of victims on the reconciliation process. The second purpose of the study is likely to have a spillover impact on the policy community, namely the importance of recognising, knowing, and

taking into account the viewpoints of the victims to create real reconciliation. The study's significance stems from the fact that there has emerged a good opportunity to create a path to long-term and sustainable peace through meaningful reconciliation following a protracted civil war, based on sons of the soil perceptions by both sides of the conflict for approximately three decades.

The author of the study has engaged in peace initiatives both academically and politically to find a peaceful settlement to the ethnic conflict since 1994., The study's authors have been involved in academic and political peace initiatives aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict between ethnic groups. The scholarly interactions and practical experience have taught that taking into consideration subaltern perspectives is critical to making peace more lasting and meaningful. This has prompted to focus on tackling the crimes and violence committed by conflicting parties, which have been often overlooked by policymakers seeking reconciliation. Such an approach is required for recollections of war victims, memorials, and memorialization carried out by players such as the government and political elites of Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims, which have haunted the reconciliation process in a variety of ways. The study is based on the assumption that the viewpoints of Sri Lankan war victims, particularly direct victims of the war, have frequently been disregarded in reconciliation discourses.

Literature Review

Concepts related to the Study

It is relevant to clarify the concepts employed in this study because our understanding is conveyed through concept. This study frequently uses three concepts: reconciliation, victims, and perception. They have been briefly explained as follows: Reconciliation is not an easy task for any community when it is fragmented on an identity-group basis (Uyangoda, 2005). They have been briefly explained as follows: Reconciliation is not an easy task for any community when fragmented on identity group basis (Uyangoda, 2005). Meaningful and long-lasting reconciliation requires truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, etc., for which there shall be a shared agreement (Van der at all, 1999). Shared agreements must be multidimensional, taking into account everyone's feelings, opinions, and beliefs (Galtung, 2001 If such an agreement is reached, it will create a space for conflicting parties to live side by side and shoulder to shoulder alongside former enemies - not necessarily to love them, forgive them, or forget the past in any way, but to coexist with them, to develop the degree of cooperation required to share our society with them, so that we all have better lives together than we have separately (Uyangoda, 2005).

The author of the current study defines politics as the process of addressing issues that have previously split identity groups or communities. Reconciliation is a parallel process

that redesigns our relationship. This is a task, and no one should expect it to be quick or easy. However, the work is well worth it: genuine reconciliation is the best guarantee that the violence of the past will not recur. If we can develop a new relationship based on respect and a genuine understanding of each other's needs, fears, and goals (Galtung, 2001), the habits and patterns of cooperation that we then create are the strongest protection against a return to violent division (Van der All, 1999, p. 148). Accordingly, reconciliation refers to how a society transitions from a divided past to a shared future.

Victims

Collective victimisation has been identified as a primary source of conflict in the social sciences, perpetuating ongoing conflicts and inciting new violence (Alexander et al., 2004). All terrible conflicts produce significant injury to individual men and women, but the majority, particularly genocide and civil war, also create collective victims. When violence is directed at a specific demographic, such as an ethnic, ideological, or religious group, collective victims emerge. Individuals are targeted in such circumstances because they belong to an identified group. Overall, the impact is to victimise society as a whole. In recent years, the world has seen a surge in violent extremism, which has claimed the lives of countless innocent people of various faiths, ethnicities, and nationalities. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the number of deaths from violent extremism and terrorism has increased more than ninefold, from 3,329 in 2000 to 32,685 in 2014 (Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2015)

Direct victims are those who have suffered the direct effects of violence. They have been killed, or physically and psychologically abused, detained, discriminated against and so on. Indirect victims are those who are linked to direct victims. As a result, they too suffer because of that link (Blumer, n.d.). According to the Declaration of the UN Commission on Human Rights, indirect victims are the family members of a direct victim (https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/). Relatives often experience extreme hardship and pain because of the suffering of a family member or by being punished because of their connection to that person - through serious socio-economic deprivation, bereavement, the loss of a breadwinner, missed educational opportunities, family breakdown, police intimidation or humiliation (Bukh, A. 2007).

Perception

It refers to the collection and interpretation of information based on previously acquired expertise. It is a type of interpretative act linked with humans that participate in understanding and communicating based on past experiences, but an act done in the process of performing it (Daddario, 2007). Our perceptions are formed from sensations, yet not all sensations result in perception. Over time, some of the sensations become normal. However, not all become normal. Some sensations lead us to ignore what is

happening here and there (Hwang, 2011). War and war memory are a drift that pulls us in different directions, causing us to be incapable of understanding and sensing certain things unnoticed even though they are happening. If one wants to make them aware of such things, a special mechanism is required to properly track them on the scene. Hence, for the present study, we define perception as the process of making sense based on past experience but as an act of doing at the time of speaking. What is presented in the following section of this article is how people make sense of the economic growth-centric reconciliation process in their native place.

In Ireland, the government introduces the programme that "Education for Reconciliation" (International IDEA, 2003). Essentially, it is an educational system intended to aid in the recovery of post-conflict societies. Because each conflict occurs in a unique setting, programmes must be designed - or altered - to fit the specific psychological, political, social, and cultural contexts in which the conflict, and hence the healing process, occurs (Brounéus, 2003). In South Africa, the programme considers the church to be a significant participant in the reconciliation process since it can provide both meeting venues and spiritual rites.

The Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor was founded in 2001 to investigate human rights violations that occurred between April 1974 and October 1999 and encourage community reconciliation. The effort in East Timor illustrates an integrated approach to reconciliation, aiming to address past sufferings via the lens of culture, religion, justice, politics, and psychology. It is an effort that extends from the top to the bottom of society.

In the name of reconciliation, Sri Lanka is currently experiencing an increase in ethnic polarisation as the state attempts to enforce Sinhala Buddhist hegemony over Tamil districts (Rajamanoharan, 2012). Many endeavours for reconciliation have taken place throughout various departments of government. Aside from socioeconomic and political measures, reconciliation necessitates the promotion of plurality and multiculturalism.

From Collective Victimhood to Social Reconciliation: Outline the Theoretical Framework

Members of previously victimised groups have become perpetrators in subsequent conflicts—in ways that are linked to the past experience of victimization. Such a change of roles in a conflict can either occur when violence is committed against the previous perpetrators of in-group harm as an act of revenge (Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006; Suedfeld, 1999). It is vital to the prevention of future violence, as past victimisation through intergroup conflict continues to shape intergroup attitudes toward the previous perpetrator group and toward other groups (Bar- Tal, 2000). Collective victimization is a result of collective violence, defined as "the instrumental use

of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group—whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity—against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives" (WHO, 2002, p. 215). Victimisation at the societal level has examined the shared beliefs group members hold regarding their group's victimisation (Bar-Tal, 2000; Volkan, 2001). There is also considerable interindividual variation in the extent to which group members perceive the in-group's victimisation as personally relevant (Pennekamp, Doosje, Zebel, & Fischer, 2007). Their perceptions are very important to post conflict society in order to achieve sustainable peace through the reconciliation process.

Materials and Methods

This study belongs to the normative tradition of political and social analysis because the author believes in the necessity of social scientific researchers focusing on both the ontic reality of the social world and contributing to the betterment of society by providing critical perspectives on existing social milieus and thus empowering the marginalised. Consequently, the study aims to amplify victims' voices and to interpret the social, cultural and political significance of popular perceptions. Those earlier studies that have adopted a positivist epistemology and their discussions on the Sri Lankan war have been dominated by analyses based on fake dichotomies, including peace versus justice, local versus international responses to atrocities, and the population's desire for forgiveness and reconciliation versus punishment (Gunasekara, 2004, p 28). The effect of those polarities has been clouded debates about appropriate ways to address war and its aftermath, implying choices when combinations of these elements often better reflect popular perceptions and lead to more effective practical strategies.

In the above context, what is more pertinent to reconciliation, reconstruction, and building peace is knowing and having an empathetic understanding of the perception of the reconciliation process of the government held by the war victims. Consequently, it was decided to employ a narrative-based ethnographic approach to collect data to gain a broad and deep understanding of victims' views of reconciliation. To gain an empathetic understanding of the feelings, acts, and social interactions of the victimised community, the author spent more than seven months from time to time, starting from April 2021 to mid-January 2022. The author went to the people together as well as individually in the daytime and at night. We discussed and wrote notes on what we understood and observed. During our interactions with the members of the community, we observed that people started crying suddenly whenever they remembered their loved ones. Consequently, the author decided to collect accounts of numerous memories, oral histories and perspectives expressed by the respondents. The researcher, through their engagement in peacebuilding and constitutional-making exercises, has been convinced of the necessity of understanding others through the lens of an enlarged mind, an idea formulated by Arendt about politics and power (Danielle and Andrew 2010, p. 78). We

hold that, following Arendt, there will be some shared humanitarian feeling if one understands the enormous suffering that has been experienced by war victims, like in the case of the aesthetic notion of beauty.

Study Area

This study has not covered the entire war-torn areas of the country. The author has selected Karadiarunaru village, Eraurpattu Divisional Secretariat in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka. The study location was chosen considering the following facts: The first is the familiarity of the study location and the logistic support available to the author through friends across the ethnic divide. One of the authors of the paper had chosen the same community as the study site for field work leading to his Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Political Sociology. The second reason was that the entire village, consisting of 438 families, has been displaced from time to time. The third reason was that the village had been the main base of the Second in Command of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) (Balasingham, 2003, p 189). The fourth reason has been the village becoming a target of the government forces and the LTTE after the division of the militant organisation based on grievances of discrimination against the Eastern Part of the Tamil Elam by the Northern Elite of the militant organisation.

Data collection and Analysis

As the researcher has chosen an ethnographic view to study this community, they have observed and interacted with the community in their real-life background. There are some reasons behind why ethnographic view has been selected by the researcher. The reason for selecting an ethnographic approach was its capacity to enable the researcher to contextually understand the meaning assigned to social acts and interactions within and among outsiders of the community. Following Walford (2008), the author of the study held an approach that facilitated both the study population and the researcher to mutually and empathetically understand and comprehend why human beings move within social worlds, the meaning assigned to social acts, and the behaviour and values of any group that needs to account for their cultural context.

The qualitative data were collected through ethnographic research. As Malinowski pointed out more than 80 years ago, the goal of ethnography is "to grasp the native's point of view…to realise his vision of the world" (1922:25). Moreover, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1997:198), the various hypotheses, theories, and interpretive frameworks brought by outside investigators "may have little or no meaning within the emic view of studied individuals, groups, societies, or cultures."(Guba and Lincoln, 1997) was thematically described as facilitating the readers to understand the experience, trauma, suffering and sorrow they had borne and their perception of reconciliation efforts with a critical evaluation of such efforts, essentially normatively biased towards

the community under the study. However, the author maintained that the data presented in this analysis represent the shared understanding of the researcher and the community that had been studied. Our representation of social reality in relation to the people of Karadiyanaru is not just based on the consideration of our interests or those of the community we had studied. Instead, we employed our imagination to think of ourselves in the place of others and asked how we would see the situation from their perspectives in relation to reconciliation efforts carried out by the government of Sri Lanka.

Results and Discussion

It has already been said that post-war cultures tend to disregard the past entirely or partially (Gunawardana, 2006). It is perhaps a desire not to reopen wounds for fear of endangering fragile peace (Charles, 2010). The researcher's discussions with the inhabitants of Karadiyanaru led him to understand them as a group of individuals suffering from forced amnesia as part of a conscious plan on the part of those who committed violence, as happened in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2009. It is a forced memory because people discovered that there was no way for them to cope with the sadness of losing loved ones and the immense hardship they had endured during the war, other than receiving modern infrastructure like roads and electricity. The people's need hierarchy is far more comprehensive and spiritual than the government's economic growth-focused reconciliation approach and strategy. People must fulfil their ceremonial obligations of remembering individuals who have died, gone missing, or are no longer visible in their spiritual lives. We understood that simply meeting infrastructure facilities would not heal the wounds of wartime memories. We understand this. People's right to remember their community members has been systematically denied, even within their own homestead. Instead, the government is erecting war monuments that diminish the dignity of one group while eulogising another. People are outraged that military monuments are not being built or erected. However, the manner in which the message was conveyed to them and the other Sri Lankan populations. Some youth who took part in the LTTE and later with Karuna Amman told us that if the government wanted to erect memorial, it would depict the disaster that the war caused rather than make it in a manner that caused mental difficulties for some communities.

The infrastructure-oriented development works carried out under the banner of *"Nagenahira Udanaya"* (Awakening of the Eastern Part) have convinced the researcher that a development strategy for the reconciliation of war wounds based solely on economic growth will not pave the way from a divided past to a shared future. Such an approach may serve as a significant impediment to genuine reconciliation because it does not allow for intercultural and inter-ethnic interchange of ideas.

The researchers have understood that the government's reconciliation strategy has been characterized by a refusal to acknowledge the pain of victims, allowing offenders to avoid responsibility, and depriving future generations of the opportunity to learn from the past and contribute to long-term peace. We noticed that victims' memories impacted their impressions of the reconciliation process. It's like a double-edged sword.

One edge of the sword can have a significant impact on long-term reconciliation. People in the area who had links with diverse constituent populations recall their lives prior to the tragic ethnic war. The village's elderly generation recalls whole sale traders and bakers who lived in Baticaloa, as well as sweet exchanges during the Sinhalese and Tamil festive seasons, and merry trips they took along the Southern Coastal Lines to Kataragama, a religious site shared by both Sinhalese and Tamils. They remembered their pilgrimage from Kumana to Kataragama and the kind reception they received as followers of a shared god, regardless of nationality, along the route (Guruge, 2016). Furthermore, several old individuals claimed that they were under the last Kandyan kingdom rather than the Jaffna kingdom during the British Encounter in Ceylon. An elder with extensive knowledge of traditional history tales continued to compare them to Sinhalese and Tamils in terms of caste structure, language, and religious traditions such as Pattini Cult devotion (Philpott, 2006). His conclusion was as follows: the war, electoral politics, and policies championed by both Sinhalese and Tamil elites had developed a sense of dishonour and discrimination among Tamils in the Eastern province. What is lacking in the present economic growth centric reconciliation package is that it has not created a space for the people to reinvigorate shared history and imagine a better future irrespective of constant and endless violent confrontation.

The other edge of the sword of memory is its capacity to germinate hindrances to reconciliation. It is related to what Andrew Rigby wrote on the matter. "Too great a concern with remembering the past can mean that the divisions and conflicts of old never die, the wounds are never healed. In such circumstances, the past continues to dominate the present and, hence, to some degree, determines the future" (Rigby, 2001). This risk has grown serious since memory is frequently selective and can be controlled and abused. Being memory selective appears to be natural. Selectivity poses substantial concerns in the case of continuous violence. We have seen a kind of memory-making enterprise by the country's political elites. The interaction with the people helped me comprehend three strands of entrepreneurial memory. These were the following

1. The government-in-power project of memorising war victory
2. Tamil political project of memorising war heroes who lost their lives for noble causes
3. People's genuine and spiritual need for remembrance

As previously stated memory can be manipulated. Governing politicians in post-conflict Sri Lanka have imposed a version of the past that increases the chances of a much-needed opportunity to get reelected for the regime. It involved an attempt at memorising and comparing the existing regime in power with that of the Great War heroes in the dynastic rule in Sri Lanka and attempting to condemn whatever and whoever spoke of commonalities, shared history, and common future, irrespective of maintaining an ethnic divide. They had been labelled as betrayers of mother land. The ideology was essentially exclusionist. The very political demography of the country made that project chauvinist and majority friendly. In the course of war, it is observable that constructing binary oppositions of we/they or friends/enemy was instrumental for the recruitment of combatants and popular help. Though war ended, the very nature of constructed binaries is their continuation as political expedients. The project has been sponsored by the state and eulogised the political leadership that happened to be in power at by the time of ending the war. The ceremonies held had been disheartening for the minority Tamils, for even ordinary people were not allowed to remember and memorize those who happened to lose their lives whether as combatants in the ethnic war or civilians that happened to be in between the waring two sides.

On the other hand, keeping alive enemy feelings towards victorious parties has been of equal significance for the Tamil political elite to become capable of becoming a leverage against the extreme chauvinist regime in power and to bargain a negotiated settlement (Maguire, 1994). To keep alive the enemy feeling towards the victorious party to the conflict, they had attempted to hold mass ceremonies of commemoration amidst government bans and restrictions. What can be said in relation to memorialisation and remembrance has been the glorification of combatants and simply forgetting those who were victimised by the war (Bar-Tal, 2012). This can be compared to post- World War II situation in France. German occupation had deeply divided the population into resisters and collaborators. There has been a well-planned operation of public discourse and academic research to minimise the importance of collaboration and maximised the role of the resistance. A glorious past was invented. If we look from the perspective of reconciliation, there is the necessity of preventing wholesale abuse of memory, which has become so common in the post war ethnic politics in Sri Lanka. Some leaders of parties in a brutal conflict had deliberately attempted to keep alive memory that fuels the fires of hatred at the cost of genuine feeling of the community under the study to make diseased and victimised and disabled in the etymological sense of the term remember (Perera, 2016). What the researcher with enlarged mind understood has been that necessity of this community is not just performing spiritual task of memorizing their loved ones but also their feeling of reflecting the enormous suffering they had to face during war and to find a way out of future disasters. This opportunity which is very much needed in the post war reconciliation efforts has been largely forgotten and denied to the

people allowing them to live with pains of the war wounds of various kind without any consolation.

The government's ban on remembrance even in their private homestead has ignored the positive role that memory could play in the reconciliation process. Memory can also be a powerful instrument for achieving reconciliation. If genuinely carried out memory of war disasters could provide early warning signals, teaching future generations of the badness of violent clashes and the danger of political construction of distrust among ethnic groups. The researcher convincingly agrees to with the point "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat" by George Santayana (https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/) but with conditions. Memorization shall find ways of having them without ethnopolitical drives. Instead, it shall be based on shared concerns and the future which recognise the difference as valuable. It can be cast in forms that are conducive to reconciliation - permanent monuments to commemorate the fate of victims, places of remembrance (for instance, Robben Island in South Africa), memorial days or plays and poems that depict badness of violent conflicts. It is expected that such measures would give collective dimension to private pain, creating a long-lasting healing mechanism. An appropriate use of memory is considerably facilitated if a truth-seeking institution - independent, official or civil society-based - has prepared the ground. A publicly acknowledged reconstruction of the past might even allow for competing memories to coexist. Given the dangers of too much memory, a society must try to attain the right delicate mixture of remembering and forgetting.

The Way of Memorialization

The two researchers understood that the community's expectation has been to give dignity to their close community who lost their lives during the war and became disabled and traumatised. The notion of those who died seems to be revolve around love and intimate feelings but not related to a discourses of war heroism. What they felt has been that those who lost their lives became victims due to bad politics played by both Sinhalese and Tamil political leadership and elite. They are victims of the chauvinist politics of both camps. The community as elders, brethren and kith and kilns of the diseased and victimised has been duty bound to celebrate their contribution to their own wellbeing.

The researcher has queried community members on ways of memorialization in five categories. Monuments to memorialise, the national day for remembering, renaming buildings or streets after those who lost their lives, constructing tombs, and giving and issuance of death certificates. Respondents have categorically stated the only issuance of death certificates and establishing tombs in proper burial grounds as most important to them. They had pointed out that national holidays, and large scale monuments are necessities for outsiders in the community. The community has started to perceive

whatever kind of mass celebrations are provoked by the instrumental logic of power politics rather than addressing the spiritual needs of remembering the diseased. Death certificates, or certificates of the unseen, are of vital significance for the restoration of community lives. Many have to face legal difficulties in relation to inheritance and other matters such as remarriages, etc. This is an unresolved issue that needs urgent attention on the part of the policy designers on reconciliation. The other important thing for the community has been the spiritual necessity of performing duties to the diseased according to the cultural practice of the community. The community has become realistic because they understand, though they have been expecting and believing them would return to their fold this day or the next that this would not happen due to the length of time. If the people are not allowed to remember them even in private places under the dictate of military-type interventions in their spiritual lives, they would not take economic growth-imperative driven reconciliation efforts positively. This is especially serious because, like the Sinhalese, this community also believed in rebirth, or the Sansara cycle, where remembering (becoming a member once again in the same fold) with loved ones is part and parcel of their life world philosophy. We understand that the people have not been positively viewing government policy on reconciliation, for there is no place to address the life-world issues of the victimised.

Perceptions on Development and Reconciliation

As many other scholars have revealed, the researcher found an aspect of externality to the memory enterprise because memory is a social process of 'collective remembering' (Jan Assmann, 1997). We understand the necessity of creating a conducive environment to memorialise community members because it would help to heal wounds of many kinds among the members of the community who are struggling to cope with past memories of hatred and suffering.

We understand people are looking for an opportunity to memorialise their members, even though they are dead but still living in the memories of the group. Allowing to be re-members of the community with their diseased and disappeared members is a necessary condition for healing the wounds of the war because community priority is to normalise their lives while performing their religious and spiritual obligations to members who have been diseased and disappeared. Memory and reconciliation are both sides of the same coin. To gain reconciliation, it is very important to address the victimisations of the people that haunt memories of the community. The best way for policy planners seems to be to not coerce people to forget memories through various kinds of military interference but to allow people to reflect on their memories and imagine a better future that allows and accommodates difference and allows them to live with difference.

Perspectives on Memorialization

We have not noticed a significant variation of perspectives among male and female over the importance of memorialization in relation to reconciliation. Around 80-84 per cent of the male and female of the community has expressed that memorialization is important for meaningful reconciliation. As they perceived memorialization is required to learn and educate future generation of the danger of violent conflict could germinate and imminent humanitarian disaster they produce irrespective of class, caste, ethnicity, gender and religion etc. Memorialization shall be framed in a manner that allow people to critically reflect on past and possible way out of hatred and violence. It is expressed that enterprising memory to gain political benefits must be stopped by all the parties to the conflict. The people have conceived of government attempt as something aimed at forceful erasing of their own very identity. The people had perceived of heroism carried out by both parties as politically motivated and attracting of members of this community to the militant organization/later organizations must be related to government policies of systematic ignoring them as equal citizens of the country and then treating them not as equal Tamils by the militant organization dominated by the Northern Tamils. What we understand of this community is that people could not name any one as hero permanently for the hero of this day has become an enemy the other day due to conflict of Northern and Eastern Tamils. They had observed that though they had been supplying much needed man power to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. (LTTE), their members could not eye on getting promoted to the higher echelon within the organization.

People have perceived the end of war as positive for their lives, indicating their desire to have a satisfied life in terms of meeting their survival needs. They have expressed that tourists coming to their village are welcome because it would provide some means for survival. We observe the start of a kind of war-and-peace tourism in the area. The eastern theatre of war is also a popular destination for Sinhalese tourists. The Sinhalese attraction to this area is largely fueled by the government propagating Sinhalese as defeaters and villains, for the government has erected victory memorials that vilify the LTTE as terrorists. The people had observed that it is very rare to observe tourists coming to see war ruins with an empathetic mind, largely due to government propaganda. The author of this article views this as a big mistake and a missed opportunity to create awareness and people-to-people interaction, allowing one another to mutually and empathetically understand. Yet government-sponsored monuments, including war symbols and army camps, which are situated in every junction of the areas, have memorialised past war arenas and war situations without iota of concern for the defeated community's sentiments. This unidimensional monument is disturbing to heal them because such attempts result in them memorising the deaths, wounded, raped, and

traumatised as still in a war-like situation. It is worthy of quoting a young woman in this regard.

"*The war was ceased by government. But we have no chances to live as before war period. We can't go even outside because there are everywhere army camps. We can't do anything with free mind. Always we have problems. Especially for girls when they saw a beautiful girl, they used to loiter in this area. There are many problems which were created by the war. We have to live with that unforgettable memory. When we remind the past, we hate both parties who were involved*".

Tourism, as carried out through research, has encapsulated economic, security, and development agendas in very specific ways. Tourist sites mobilised fear of potential terrorism and a return to the rule of the LTTE by projecting that vigilance and militarization have not been in place. The logic behind securitization and militarization has been to portray development as best done by the military. Within this logic of securitization, militarization becomes a critical component of the government approach to reconciliation, barring the positive contribution that tourism could play in the reconciliation process. The cumulative result of all these initiatives has been allowing the prewar bad perception of ethnic others as enemies rather than people to be destined for a common destiny within the large framework of Sri Lanka. This kind of approach to reconciliation and development allows us to bring forgotten memories back to life in the community. Discussion so far on community perceptions of development, reconciliation, and war memory has led us to discuss victimised community ideas on how to achieve reconciliation

Victims and Reconciliation

The community of this village has been struggling to come to terms with their anger or strife caused by violent clashes. We have found a number of individuals struggling to cope with stress, mental health disorders, and relationship problems. If peace and reconciliation were to be reached, people felt the necessity of establishing a mechanism for revealing the truth, confessing and forgiving those who committed crimes, and creating lasting peace among the communities in Sri Lanka.

What we noticed in the process of economic growth-oriented policy on reconciliation is that it has not incorporated a component of fact finding, truth-revealing, or a general mechanism for forgiving. We found parents who have lost their children, wives who have lost husbands, children who have lost fathers, and so on. Besides them being lost, their disappearance has made their lives more complicated. Some of the families are facing legal and social challenges. For instance, after being widowed at a young age, she needed to get remarried. But without proper mechanisms in place to assure whether one is alive or dead, he or she is committing a wrong under the law and the customs of the

community. Some of the families living there had to face the issue of how to divide the small plot of land among family members due to the fact that there was no clue as to whether the owner was living or not. Besides all those physical and legal issues, the people of the village have been mentally struggling to know who was responsible for the wrong committed against them. This is a serious issue in the context of the village being the target of the government army at the high noon of ethnic conflict in the area and later the target of the LTTE as well after the division between LTTE Supremo Velupillai Prabakaran and Second in Command, Karuna Amman. When the Army entered the village, some disappeared, and some were killed. LTTE invaded the village; some of the members of the villagers lost their lives, and some disappeared on the suspicious ground that they were supporters of Karuna Amman. Members of the Karuna Amman Faction brutalised villagers on suspicion of being supporters of the LTTE. It is in this context that people demanded a mechanism to reveal the truth and then proceeded to a higher level of reconciliation.

Related to the above is the lack of a compensation component in the reconciliation efforts. The people perceived that there would be a proper compensation package in place for lost lives, destroyed assets, and lost lands for these victims. Still, these victims do not have permission to access their lands. Their houses and other properties have been destroyed by a 30-year-long war from time to time. Even though family members and their closest relatives were lost, they have been waiting to meet them. However, if they don't have any chance to meet them or build up their property, they should be given compensation for those things.

Civilians in war-torn areas have faced violations of rights, and still they find it difficult to enjoy their rights. Particularly, young people perceived the drift towards LTTE as related to a lack of rights for the villagers as equal citizens of the country. They have fought on behalf of their rights. The young have perceived that even after the war, authorities have failed to create and let the people feel that they are treated equally. The researcher has observed that the conditions under which this community has been living are characterised by poor quality of education, health, and utilities such as electricity and consumable water. What people have felt is that they perceive reconciliation and peace as something preconditional. The community members had expressed that they had been discriminated against by the Government of the Southern, their imagined brethren of Northern Tamils, as well as elites within their own fold. We have noticed the labelling of the Sri Lankan government as the Government of Southerners as well as Imagined Brethren of Northern as implying something special. In a nutshell, this indicates that the Sri Lankan government has served only the interests of the Sinhalese majority in the southern areas of the country. Imagined Northern Brethren indicate that they are brothers only in their imagination. People had referred to the LTTE dominance of the area and their attitudes towards the well-being of the Eastern Tamils. People have pointed out that LTTE has treated the Eastern Part of its Elam as a provider of

much-needed combatants to the organisation while neglecting education and health facilities for the Eastern Part. Some have pointed out that the that the LTTE was very concerned with educating the children of the North, even amidst the war, while neglecting the education of the children of the Eastern Part. A former member of the LTTE and later Karuna Amman narrated the attitudes of northern doctors working in hospitals in the Eastern Province. With the Karuna-Prabakaran fraction within LTTE, they have prevented attending to casualties of patients of Karuana factions. A young man narrated that when a medical surgeon was not available, a doctor with M.B.B.S. qualification alone operated on a patient seriously wounded in open space and rescued the patient because he was originally from Easter Part. He explained that the officers from the Northern Part of Sri Lanka have not been attentive to the grievances of the people of the Eastern Part.

Further, the researcher has noticed a growing anti-Muslim sentiment among some of the community members. This feeling partly has to do with the anti-Muslim attitude created by the LTTE and the strategic partnering of believers in Islam with the government to resist the exclusionary Tamil State Crafting Project of the LTTE, and partly with business and commerce. The community has been oriented to view Muslims as a community that breeds their community without limit to become the majority in the near future and become rich through shrewd business. It has gained currency both among the Tamils and among the Sinhalese. This also indicates the possibility of the Muslims occupying the place of the enemy, at least within Eastern Provincial Council politics, in the near future. That is because, as is common in many other places around the world, this type of political question has been shaped by moral codes since the end of Cold War politics. The political question asked is not what is correct or wrong, but who is correct and wrong. As Chantal Mouffe stated, politics started to be played on moral values, making the possibilities of politics beyond religion impossible. The researcher has observed a growing anti-Muslim feeling and possible partnering of Buddhists and Hindus in the future with the objective of keeping political power beyond Muslims in the Eastern province. When we hired a three-wheeler, the driver went on to say, "Sir, you people as well, we do not eat beef; we share a common culture unlike Muslims. They are breeding to overcome us all." How is this sentiment expressed? However, the vicious chain of replacing enemies by this group or that group would continue into the future. The possibilities of preventing such a vicious cycle of enemy politics can be prevented only by a political project that addresses both common issues among people across ethnic divides and specific cultural autonomy issues simultaneously.

Conclusion

Memory plays a crucial role in the post-war scenario, and it has become a crucial point in achieving reconciliation, according to the victims. The memory of the war victims should be clearly and correctly addressed. If not for the bitter truth of war, the memories of the

victims can be handed down from generation to generation. These war victims do not demand a large-scale memorialization process to heal their past memories. Only they request fair conditions for their heroes and the closest.

However, everyone wanted to have at least one proper mechanism for the memorialization of these people and incidents. Both men and women have agreed that memorialization is important for reconciliation. According to them, it will be helpful to heal their unforgettable memories so they can mentally and physically be settled in the real situation and experience the reality of life. Victims of the Sri Lankan War defined reconciliation in a varied manner, but with a strong focus on unity and living together and an absence of violence. Reconciliation was perceived at different levels and in a multifaceted manner, with national-level political reconciliation, interpersonal and community reconciliation, as well as intrapersonal and moral reconciliation, all perceived as important. Intrapersonal conceptions of reconciliation suggested by our interviewees add a facet to most understandings in the literature that focus on national and interpersonal reconciliation. Reconciliation was primarily perceived as an outcome that is achieved mostly by external intervention rather than as a process between actors. This community perceived the post-war reconciliation process of the government as overfocusing on infrastructure development at the cost of their real issues, which include physical as well as spiritual aspects of their lives. Unless that dimension of memory and perceptual dimensions of the reconciliation process are addressed, meaningful reconciliation would remain a fantasy for the Southern politicians.

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